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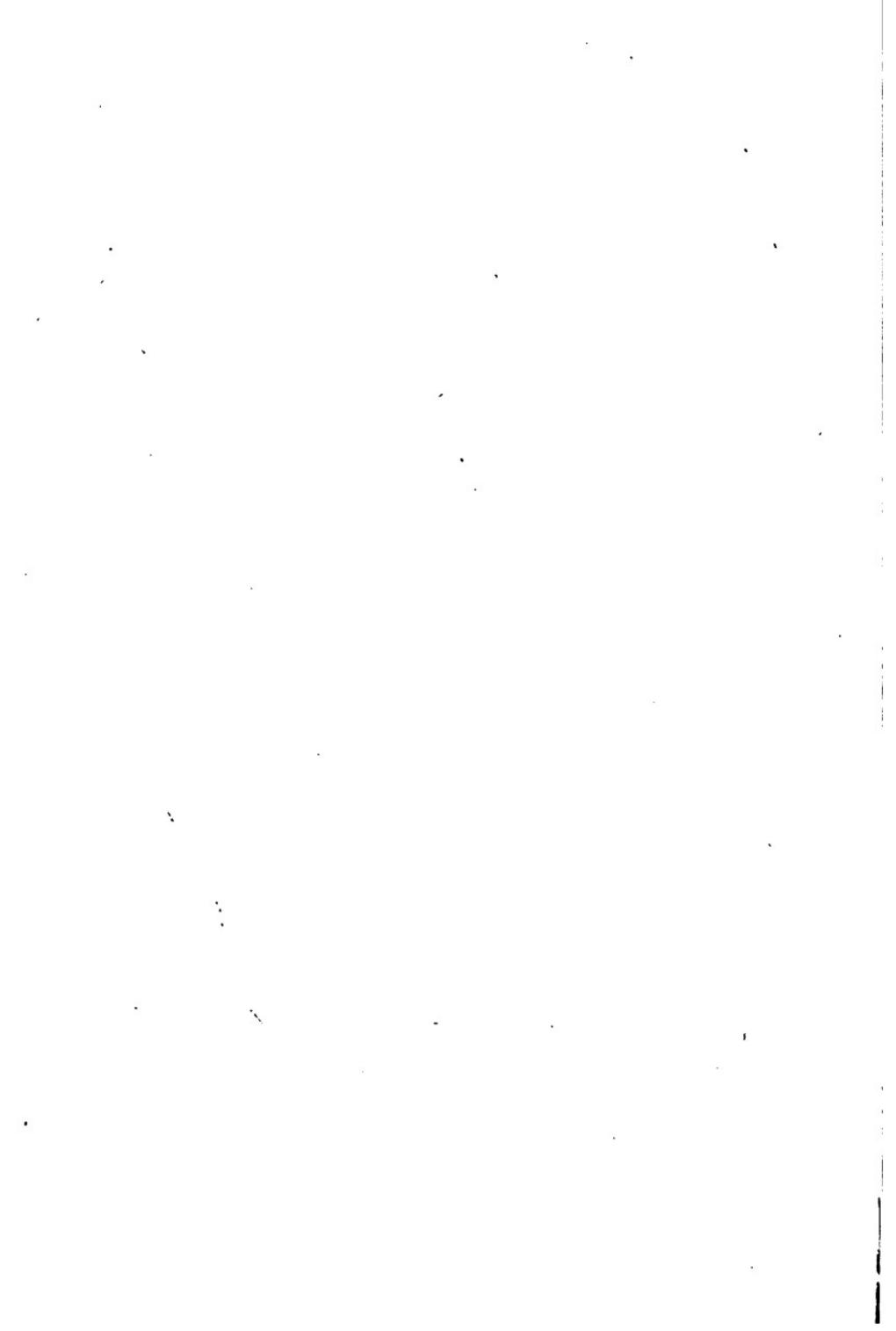
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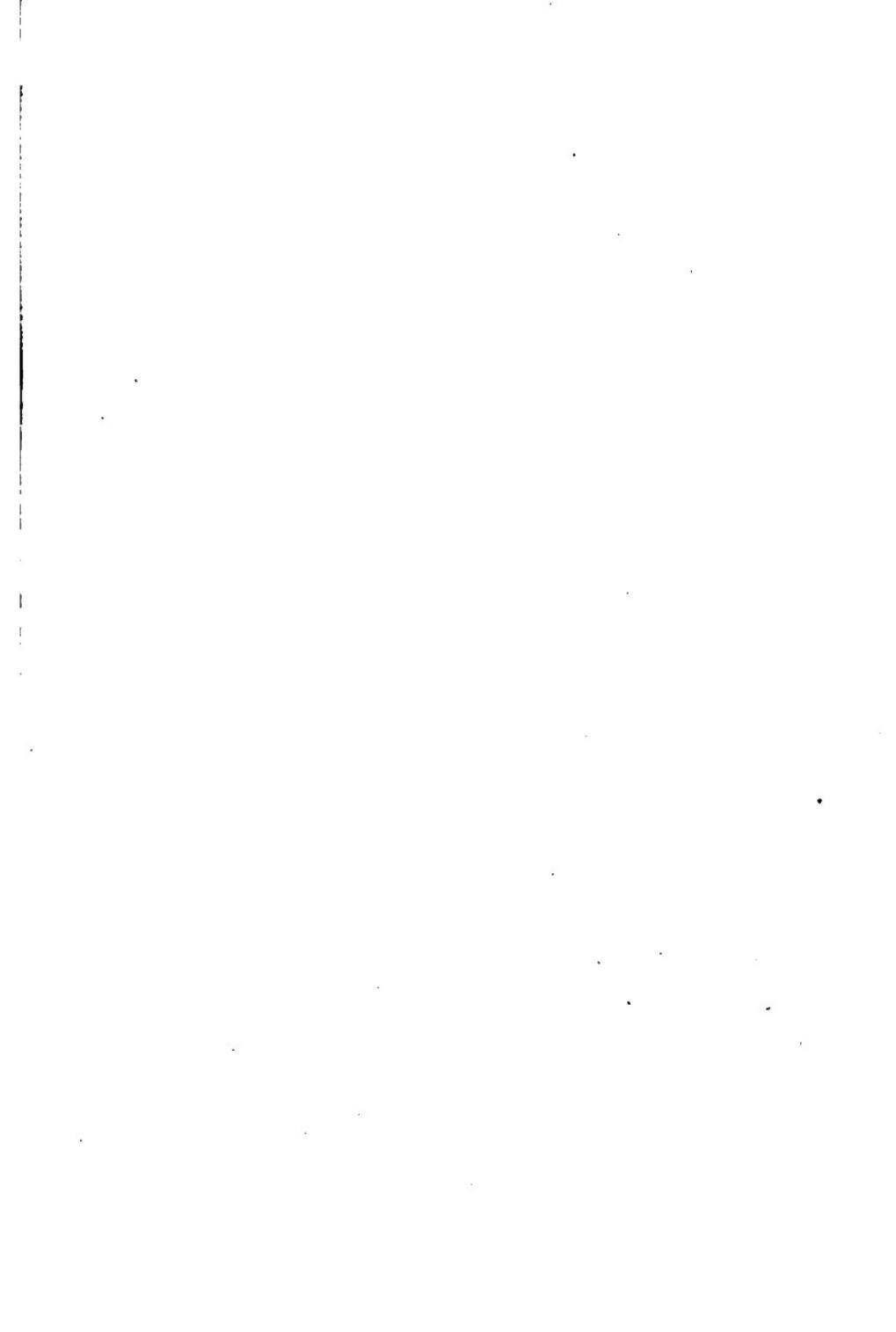
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Robert McKenzie  
English IV  
Class of 1921.

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JOHN MILTON.

# SELECT MINOR POEMS

OF

# JOHN MILTON.

HYMN ON THE NATIVITY,  
L'ALLEGRO, IL PENSERO SO,  
COMUS, LYCIDAS.

WITH

*BIOGRAPHY, INTRODUCTIONS, NOTES, ETC.*

EDITED BY

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## PREFACE.

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DURING the last fifteen years the study of English Literature has gained increased attention in school and college. Such a general awakening to an appreciation of the beauties of our master authors has brought with it a demand for text-books suitable for the classroom. If it be asked why the present volume is added to the list of such books already on the market, the editor would say that he has endeavored to put into book form the material which an experience of ten years in teaching Milton has shown him to be helpful in his own classes. It is his hope that it may likewise prove valuable and helpful to others.

The editor desires to call attention to the following points which he has tried to make prominent in the book:—

1. A somewhat detailed life of Milton, containing whatever tended to mould his character or to influence his writings, and omitting all extraneous matter.
2. A chronological table, containing, in parallel columns, the principal historical events of Milton's time, and the prominent events of his own life.
3. Introductions to the several poems, explaining their nature, the circumstances under which they were written; comments on their subject-matter, style, metre, etc.
4. A carefully edited text, clear and attractive to the eye.
5. Notes suggestive and interpretative, concise, stimulating, and to the point.
6. A simple form of expression within the comprehension of the ordinary pupil, and avoiding high-sounding, meaningless expressions.

It will be generally admitted that a study of the works of any author involves more than a cursory reading of the text. The pupil should be familiar with the author himself, and the circumstances surrounding him, to enable him to see as the author sees, and to feel

as he feels. A brief biography of the author, then, is essential. The chronological table will serve to impress upon the pupil's mind the period in which the author lived, and the world about him.

In the matter of notes there is considerable controversy. Many teachers prefer a good text with few or no notes, depending on the pupils to make their own investigations. This plan seems hardly practicable; for the majority of pupils have not the necessary reference library at their command, and even if they had, the time spent in investigation involves a great deal of useless labor, which serves only to detract from their enjoyment of an author's work. If the object be to understand an author's meaning, and to appreciate the sublimity of his thoughts and language, some notes will be valuable. To be a real help to the pupil, notes should be judiciously selected; they should be suggestive, sympathetic, concise, and pointed. They should stimulate the pupil in his study rather than fill his path with obstacles. It has been the editor's aim in the present book to fulfil these requirements; but as it is necessary in making a book of this kind to consider the many rather than the few, he has made his notes more diffuse than he would have done if good reference libraries were more general. It is not expected that all the notes will prove alike valuable to all who use the book; but it is hoped that all may find them sufficiently helpful to enable them to appreciate more fully these beautiful poems of Milton.

It is hoped that all pupils may have access to the following books of reference, and to as many more as possible:—

An Unabridged Dictionary,  
A good Encyclopædia,  
A Biographical Dictionary,  
A Classical Dictionary,  
A Gazetteer,  
A Dictionary of English Literature,  
A volume of Shakespeare's works.

In conclusion the editor desires to express his thanks to Miss Julia C. Clarke, of the Chauncy Hall School, Boston, and to Mr. Byron Groce, of the Boston Latin School, for a careful reading of the manuscript, and for valuable suggestions.

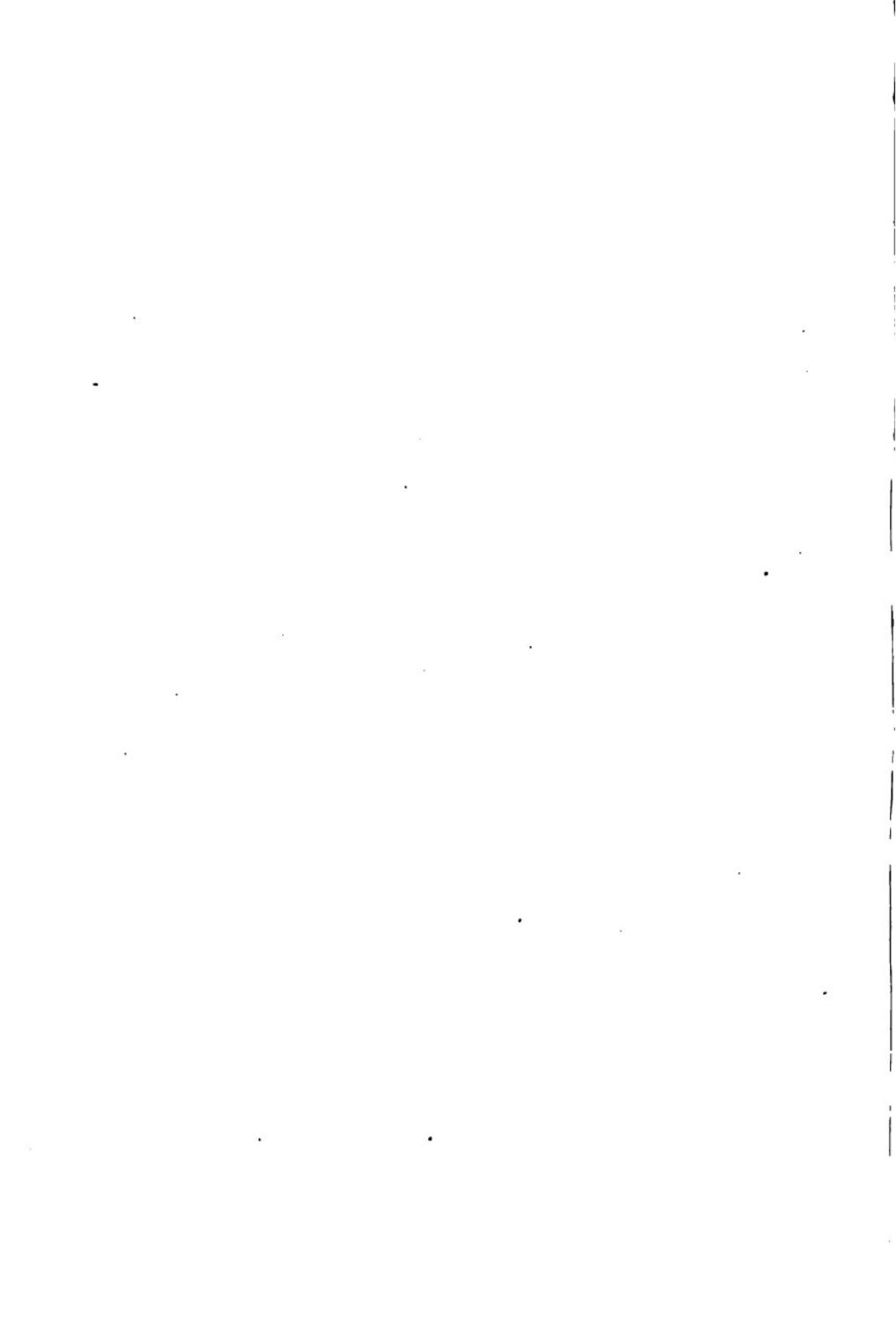
J. E. T.

BOSTON, August, 1895.

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## THE LIFE OF JOHN MILTON.

1608-1674.

IN the seventeenth century it was not customary to write detailed biographies of eminent authors. Of Milton, however, we have an exhaustive account in Prof. Masson's "Life and Times of John Milton," although written two centuries after the poet's death. It is from this work that we have gathered largely our material for the account which follows.

John Milton, son of John and Sara Milton, was born in Bread Street, Cheapside, London, Dec. 9, 1608. He was the second of three surviving children, his sister Anne being older, and his brother Christopher younger, than the poet. The elder John Milton, of respectable family, had been disinherited by his father for conforming to the Established Church. He settled in London, and became a scrivener and a money-lender. Being a man of probity and economy, he acquired a plentiful fortune. He had received a liberal education, and possessed considerable musical talent. The poet owed his skill as an organist to his father's training.

Milton early gave promise of becoming a scholar. His father destined him from a child to the study of letters, and superintended his education. He was first placed under a private tutor, Thomas Young, a Puritan clergyman, to whom he became strongly attached. Young remained his teacher for some time after he was sent to St. Paul's School, then under Dr. Alexander Gill. At this school Milton spent several years, preparing for the university. From his own testimony he was a hard student. He says in one of his later works, "From my twelfth year I scarcely ever went to bed before midnight, which was the first cause of injury to my eyes." Before his school-days were over he had become proficient in Latin and Greek, could read French and Italian, and knew

something of Hebrew. His earliest poetry, an adaptation of two of the Psalms, dates from this period.

Milton was ready for the university at sixteen. He was admitted as a pensioner at Christ's College, Cambridge, Feb. 12, 1625. He remained at Cambridge seven years, and took the degrees of B.A. and M.A. Meanwhile he wrote a few poems, notably the *Hymn on the Nativity*, his first important production.

In 1632 Milton left Cambridge and retired to Horton, a small village in Buckinghamshire, where his father was then living. The father had long before designed his son for orders in the church, but by this time the latter's antipathy to the formalities of the Established Church was so great that he gave up all idea of taking holy orders. It is probable that he was already imbued with the idea of devoting his life to poetry. With the encouragement of his father, he applied himself for the next five years to the study of literature in preparation for his chosen vocation. It was during this period that he wrote those charming lyrics, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the beautiful Masque, *Comus*, and the matchless elegy, *Lycidas*.

Milton had early learned Italian. In his reading he had become strongly attracted by Italian poetry. Dante and Petrarch, Tasso and Ariosto, were familiar to him; and he longed to visit Italy, the nursery of art and letters. Accordingly, early in 1638, Milton, with his father's permission, undertook a journey to the Continent. He first visited Paris, where he was introduced to the historian Grotius. After a brief stay in Paris he pushed on to Italy, the home of the greatest masters of painting, sculpture, and poetry, where he feasted his eyes on the scenes he had so long imagined. His first stop was at Florence, where his reputation had probably preceded him. Here he was hospitably entertained by the academies or private literary societies which flourished in abundance at that time. Here, too, he became intimate with the men of letters and the scholars of the city, who greeted him with sonnets and epigrams, which he returned in kind. On his return visit to Florence he made the acquaintance of Galileo, then grown old, and a prisoner to the Inquisition.

From Florence, Milton proceeded to Rome, where he remained two months, seeing all the treasures of the famous Vatican library.

Thence he visited Naples, where he met the venerable Manso, the friend and patron of Tasso, from whom he received many civilities. It had been his intention to continue his travels; but while at Naples he received tidings of the civil disturbances which were then agitating England, and resolved to return home, deeming it disgraceful to idle away his time abroad while his countrymen were contending for their liberty.

Milton finally reached England in August, 1639. It seems to have been his idea to take an active part in the political disturbances of the time. He was an ardent Puritan, and the condition of affairs aroused all the energy of his character. In despite of this, he resumed his quiet and studious life, and took permanent quarters in a retired portion of London, "cheerfully leaving the issue of public affairs first to God, and then to those to whom the people had committed the charge." Here he spent the next nine years as a teacher of youth, his pupils being his two nephews and the sons of some of his intimate friends.

Meanwhile the political turmoil was approaching a crisis. Milton saw that it needed a strong pen to combat the documents put forth by the Royalists, and he felt it incumbent on himself to take a more prominent part in the "troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes." Accordingly, he put forth pamphlet after pamphlet in behalf of the Independents. He wrote on *Church Government, Divorce, Education, and Defence of the English People. Ikonoclastes* and a *Defence of Smectymnuus* appeared in answer to Royalist pamphlets; and in 1644 he brought out *Areopagitica*, or a *Defence of Unlicensed Printing*, the noblest of his prose works.

In the summer of 1643 the poet took to himself a wife, Miss Mary Powell. Milton was at this time thirty-four years of age, his bride about eighteen. The marriage did not prove a happy one, and the conditions brought about by incompatibility and disunion led to Milton's celebrated pamphlets on *Divorce*, which incurred the violent enmity of the Presbyterian clergy.

So engrossed had Milton become in the social and political questions of the day that he had abandoned for a time his chosen pursuit of poetry, and given himself up to political work. This period in his life filled twenty years, and those the most vigorous in his manhood. He threw himself into the struggle with all the

ardor of his nature. He was a zealot among zealots. His pamphlets were inflammatory appeals addressed to the passions of the hour. They were too partisan to help his cause, and would never have survived on their literary merit. Their one redeeming feature was that they were written on the side of liberty. They number twenty-five.

After the death of Charles I., in 1649, Milton was appointed Secretary of Foreign Tongues under the Council of State. The duties of the office were chiefly the translation of dispatches to and from foreign governments. He was also from time to time commissioned by the Council to write answers to the numerous pamphlets and books which had appeared in behalf of the Royalist cause.

The poet's sight had been failing for some time, the trouble being largely due to overwork. In 1650 he had lost the sight of one eye. The doctors had warned him that he would lose the sight of the other if he continued his literary work; but, from a sense of "supreme duty," he persisted in writing his *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, and, as a consequence, in 1652 he became totally blind. He continued his duties as secretary, however, until the Restoration.

The same year in which Milton lost his sight his wife died, leaving three young daughters. He married again in 1656, but his second wife lived only fifteen months after the marriage; it is she to whom his sonnet *To My Deceased Wife* is addressed. In 1663 the blind poet took to himself a third wife, who survived him. His last marriage appears to have been in all respects a happy one.

At the Restoration, 1660, Milton shared the peril of other ill-fated Independents. He concealed himself for a time, until the passage of the Indemnity Act made it safe for him to come forth. Two of his books were burned by the hangman; and he himself suffered arrest later, but was soon discharged.

With the fall of the Republic, Milton could once more entertain the dream of his life. It had been his ambition to write a great epic. For years he had been considering a proper subject, and had finally settled on *Paradise Lost, or The Fall of Man*. A few lines were written, perhaps, as early as 1642, but he

did not go to work on the poem in earnest until 1658. It was finished about 1665, and published in 1667. Milton received in all the meagre sum of £10 for this great work.

In 1671 appeared *Paradise Regained*, and about the same time *Samson Agonistes*. These were the last of his poetical productions. In the few remaining years of his life he published a few prose works, and at the time of his death was preparing for the press an elaborate theological compendium, entitled *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*.

Milton died in 1674. He had for many years been afflicted with the gout. Repeated attacks of the disease at last told on him, and on the 8th of November he passed away. He was buried in the chancel of St. Giles, Cripplegate, one of the few famous old London churches that had been spared in the Great Fire of 1666.

It is difficult in a short space to make a proper estimate of Milton's work. Great as an artist, he was equally pure and lofty in character. Deeming poetry to be the divinest of all arts, he felt that, in consecrating himself to it, moral development must go hand in hand with intellectual cultivation. Virtue must be the ruling constituent of the poet's nature. His poetry must breathe the spirit of chastity. Purity of heart must precede purity of utterance. With these lofty ideas of his calling, he put new life into every kind of poetry that he touched. Following hard upon the intemperance of Elizabethan writers, he was yet free from their influence. His taste was as severe, his verse as polished, his method and language as strict, as any of the later schools. He created the English epic. He put poetry on a higher plane than it had ever been put before. Among the world's poets he stands with Homer, Virgil, and Dante. Next to Shakespeare, he may be considered the greatest English poet.

"Three poets in three distant ages born,  
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn ;  
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed,  
The next in majesty, in both the last.  
The force of Nature could no further go ;  
To make a third, she joined the other two."

DRYDEN.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

HISTORICAL EVENTS.	LIFE OF MILTON.
1608. James I., King of England. Emigration to America, Jamestown, 1607.	Birth of John Milton, Dec. 9.
1611. Translation of Bible completed.	
1616. Death of Shakespeare. Cardinal Richelieu begins his career.	
1618. Sir Francis Bacon becomes Lord Chancellor. Sir Walter Raleigh executed. Gustavus Adolphus King of Sweden.	
1620. Emigration of Pilgrims to Plymouth.	Milton goes to St. Paul's School about this time.
1625. Death of James I. Accession of Charles I.	Milton becomes a pensioner at Christ's College, Cambridge.
1626. Death of Lord Bacon.	
1629. Oliver Cromwell made his first speech in Parliament. Emigration of Puritans to America. Salem and Boston (1630) founded.	Milton wrote <i>Ode on the Nativity</i> . Degree of A.B. at Cambridge.
1631. Birth of Dryden.	
1632. Battle of Lutzen, Gustavus Adolphus killed. John Locke born.	Milton took degree of A.M. at Cambridge. Retired to Horton for five years. Composed <i>L'Allegro</i> and <i>Il Penseroso</i> .
1633. Galileo condemned by Inquisition. Afterwards released.	
1634. Maryland settled by English Catholics.	Milton composed <i>Comus</i> .
1637. Ben Jonson, poet and dramatist, died.	Milton composed <i>Lycidas</i> .
1638. Delaware settled by Swedes. Covenant signed by Scots.	Milton travelled on the Continent.
1640. Long Parliament assembled.	Milton settled in London. Became a teacher.

HISTORICAL EVENTS.	LIFE OF MILTON.
1641. Collision between Charles I. and Parliament. Execution of the Earl of Strafford.	Milton wrote pamphlets on <i>Reformation in England</i> , <i>Reason of Church Government</i> , and others.
1642. Commencement of Civil War. Battle of Edgehill.	Milton wrote <i>Smectymnuus</i> .
1643. Battle of Newbury. Death of John Hampden. Beginning of Louis XIV's reign of seventy-two years.	Milton married his first wife.
1644. Battle of Marston Moor. Defeat of Royalists. Rise of Cromwell.	Milton wrote <i>Areopagitica</i> and other pamphlets.
1645. Battle of Naseby. Royalists defeated by Cromwell.	Milton published the first edition of his poems.
1649. Charles I. beheaded. Commonwealth established.	Milton appointed Latin Secretary. Begun <i>History of England</i> . Wrote <i>Ikonoclastes</i> .
1651. Charles II. crowned at Scone. Battle of Worcester. Charles defeated by Cromwell.	Milton wrote <i>Defence of the English People</i> .
1652. Dutch War. Naval victories of Blake.	Milton became blind. Death of Milton's wife.
1653. Cromwell made Protector.	
1656. Spanish War. Blake defeats the Spaniards.	Milton married his second wife.
1658. Death of Oliver Cromwell. Richard Cromwell made Protector.	Death of Milton's second wife. <i>Paradise Lost</i> begun.
1660. Restoration of Charles II. Act of Indemnity.	Milton published several pamphlets.
1664. Second Dutch War. English take New Netherlands.	Milton married his third wife.
1665. Defeat of the Dutch by James, Duke of York. Great Plague in London.	<i>Paradise Lost</i> finished.
1667. The Dutch sail up the Medway. Dryden publishes <i>Annus Mirabilis</i> .	<i>Paradise Lost</i> published.
1671. Coventry Act. Dryden, Poet Laureate.	<i>Paradise Regained</i> and <i>Samson Agonistes</i> published.
1674. Peace with Holland.	Second edition of <i>Paradise Lost</i> . Death of Milton.

## AUTHORS CONTEMPORARY WITH MILTON.

ROBERT HERRICK . . .	1594-1674	Lyric Poets.
GEORGE HERBERT . . .	1592-1634	
SIR JOHN SUCKLING . . .	1608-1642	
RICHARD CRASHAW . . .	1615-1650	
ABRAHAM COWLEY . . .	1618-1667	
SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT, 1605-1668		
ANDREW MARVEL . . .	1621-1678	
JOHN DRYDEN . . .	1631-1700	Poet and Dramatist. <i>(The Complete Angler.)</i>
BEN JONSON . . .	1573-1637	Satirist. <i>(Hudibras.)</i>
IZAAK WALTON . . .	1593-1683	A celebrated London preacher and writer.
SAMUEL BUTLER . . .	1612-1680	<i>(The Saints' Rest.)</i>
JEREMY TAYLOR . . .	1613-1667	<i>(The Pilgrim's Progress.)</i>
RICHARD BAXTER . . .	1615-1691	Philosopher.
JOHN BUNYAN . . .	1628-1688	
JOHN LOCKE . . .	1632-1704	

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## BOOKS OF REFERENCE FOR THE STUDY OF MILTON.

Of the many books pertaining to Milton and his works, the few which are mentioned in the following list will be most accessible to the ordinary pupil.

**Life and Times of John Milton**, by PROF. DAVID MASSON.

**The Poetical Works of John Milton**, three volumes, edition of 1890,  
by PROF. DAVID MASSON.

**The Globe Edition of Milton**, one volume, by PROF. MASSON.

**Life of John Milton**, *English Men of Letters Series*, by the REV.  
MARK PATTISON. (Especially convenient for young students)

**John Milton**, *Classical Writers Series*, by the REV. STOPFORD A.  
BROOKE.

**Milton**, *Lives of the Poets*, by DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON. (An unjust and  
prejudiced view of Milton.)

**Essay on Milton**, by THOMAS B. MACAULAY.

**Essay on Milton**, *Among My Books*, by JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

## HYMN ON THE NATIVITY.

### INTRODUCTION.

THIS hymn was written by Milton in the year 1629, when he was just twenty-one years of age, and before he left Cambridge. The poem was first printed in the 1645 edition of his poems, with the heading, "Compos'd in 1629." In the edition of 1645 it is given the place of honor, viz., the prelude. From a reference in Milton's sixth Latin elegy we know that this hymn was begun on Christmas Day, 1629. This elegy is addressed to his friend Charles Diodati. Diodati had written to Milton to excuse himself for having neglected the Muses. In Milton's reply he makes the following reference to his *Nativity Hymn* : —

"At tu si quid agam scitabere, si modo saltem  
Esse putas tanti noscere siquid agam.  
Paciferum canimus caelesti semine regem,  
Faustaque sacratis secula pacta libris ;  
Vagitumque Dei et stabulantem paupere tecto  
Qui suprema suo cum patre-regna colit ;  
Stelli-parumque polum, modulantesque aethere turmas  
Et subito elios ad sua fana deos.  
Dona quidem dedimus Christi natalibus illa,  
Illa sub auroram lux mihi prima tulit."

The *Hymn of the Nativity* has been the subject of much comment among the critics. Dr. Johnson did not notice it. Warton, after calling stanzas xix. and xxvi. the best part of it, adds, "The rest chiefly consists of affected conceits, which his early youth and the fashion of the times can only excuse." Hallam considers the poem as "perhaps the finest in the English language." Landor says of stanzas iv. to vii. of the Hymn itself that "They are the noblest piece of lyric poetry in any modern language," adding with regret, "the remainder is here and there marred by the fetid mud of the Italian," to the influence of

which literature he attributes many of the redundancies and exaggerations of Milton's verse.

In spite of all criticism, however, the poem must be considered a beautiful production. Milton at the time of its composition was still young; he had not attained the style and finish of riper years. For all that, the poem reveals many of the qualities which distinguished the poet's later work. In the language of Mr. Verity, "We have the same learning, full, for the classical scholar, of far-reaching suggestion; the same elevation and inspired enthusiasm of tone; above all, the same absolute grandeur of style."

The metre of the introductory stanzas differs from that of the Hymn itself. In them Milton uses the seven-line stanza in which Chaucer wrote several of his Canterbury Tales. It is a modification of the Italian eight-line stanza. Milton has introduced the Alexandrine in the seventh line instead of the heroic verse. In the Hymn itself the metrical arrangement seems to be Milton's own invention. The stanza has eight lines, composed of verses of four different lengths. Lines 1 and 2, 4 and 5 are rhymed couplets of three feet; lines 3 and 6 have five feet, and are rhymed; lines 7 and 8 rhyme, line 7 having four feet, line 8 being an Alexandrine. Milton, like Chaucer, makes frequent use of the foot of one syllable at the beginning of the line.

## HYMN ON THE NATIVITY.

### I.

THIS is the month and this the happy morn,  
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,  
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,  
Our great redemption from above did bring ;  
For so the holy sages once did sing  
That he our deadly forfeit should release,  
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

5

### II.

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,  
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,  
Wherewith he wont at heaven's high council-table  
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,  
He laid aside ; and, here with us to be,  
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,  
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

10

### III.

Say, Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein  
Afford a present to the Infant God ?  
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain  
To welcome him to this his new abode,  
Now while the heaven, by the Sun's team untrod,  
Hath took no print of the approaching light,  
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright ?

15

20

## IV.

See how from far upon the eastern road  
 The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet !  
 O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,  
 And lay it lowly at his blessed feet !  
 Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,  
 And join thy voice unto the angel quire,  
 From out his secret altar touch'd with hallow'd fire.

25

## THE HYMN.

## I.

It was the winter wild,  
 While the heaven-born child  
 All meanly wrapp'd in the rude manger lies ;  
 Nature in awe to him  
 Had doff'd her gaudy trim,  
 With her great Master so to sympathize :  
 It was no season then for her  
 To wanton with the Sun, her lusty paramour.

30

35

## II.

Only with speeches fair  
 She woos the gentle air  
 To hide her guilty front with innocent snow  
 And on her naked shame,  
 Pollute with sinful blame,  
 The saintly veil of maiden white to throw,  
 Confounded that her Maker's eyes  
 Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

40

## III.

But he her fears to cease  
 Sent down the meek-eyed Peace ;  
 She, crown'd with olive green, came softly sliding

45

Down through the turning sphere,  
His ready harbinger,  
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing ;  
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,  
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

## IV.

No war or battle's sound  
Was heard the world around :  
The idle spear and shield were high uphung,  
The hooked chariot stood  
Unstain'd with hostile blood,  
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng ;  
And kings sat still with awful eye,  
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

55

60

## V.

But peaceful was the night  
Wherein the Prince of Light  
His reign of peace upon the earth began.  
The winds with wonder whist  
Smoothly the waters kiss'd,  
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,  
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,  
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

65

## VI.

The stars with deep amaze  
Stand fix'd in steadfast gaze,  
Bending one way their precious influence,  
And will not take their flight,  
For all the morning light,  
Or Lucifer that often warn'd them thence,  
But in their glimmering orbs did glow  
Until their Lord himself bespake and bid them go.

70

75

## VII.

And, though the shady gloom  
 Had given day her room,  
 The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,  
 And hid his head for shame,  
 As his inferior flame  
 The new-enlighten'd world no more should need :  
 He saw a greater Sun appear  
 Than his bright throne or burning axletree could bear.

80

## VIII.

The shepherds on the lawn,  
 Or ere the point of dawn,  
 Sat simply chatting in a rustic row ;  
 Full little thought they than  
 That the mighty Pan  
 Was kindly come to live with them below ;  
 Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,  
 Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

85

## IX.

When such music sweet  
 Their hearts and ears did greet  
 As never was by mortal finger strook  
 Divinely-warbled voice  
 Answering the stringed noise,  
 As all their souls in blissful rapture took ;  
 The air, such pleasure loath to lose,  
 With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

95

## X.

Nature, that heard such sound  
 Beneath the hollow round  
 Of Cynthia's seat the airy region thrilling,

101

Now was almost won  
To think her part was done,  
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling ;  
She knew such harmony alone  
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

105

## XI.

At last surrounds their sight  
A globe of circular light,  
That with long beams the shamefac'd Night array'd ;  
The helmed Cherubim  
And sworded Seraphim  
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings display'd,  
Harping in loud and solemn quire,  
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-born Heir.

110

115

## XII.

Such music, as 'tis said,  
Before was never made,  
But when of old the Sons of Morning sung,  
While the Creator great  
His constellations set,  
And the well-balanc'd world on hinges hung,  
And cast the dark foundations deep,  
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

120

## XIII.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres !  
Once bless our human ears,  
If ye have power to touch our senses so ;  
And let your silver chime  
Move in melodious time,  
And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow ;  
And with your ninefold harmony  
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

125

130

XIV

For if such holy song  
Inwrap our fancy long,  
    Time will run back and fetch the age of gold ; 135  
And speckled Vanity  
Will sicken soon and die,  
    And leproous Sin will melt from earthly mould ;  
And Hell itself will pass away,  
    And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day. 140

xv.

Yea, Truth and Justice then  
Will down return to men,  
    Orb'd in a rainbow ; and, like glories wearing,  
Mercy will sit between,  
Thron'd in celestial sheen,  
    With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering ;  
And heaven, as at some festival,  
Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

XVI.

But wisest Fate says, No,  
This must not yet be so ;    150  
The babe yet lies in smiling infancy  
That on the bitter cross  
Must redeem our loss,  
So both himself and us to glorify ;  
Yet first, to those ychain'd in sleep,                                  155  
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the  
deep.

XVII.

With such a horrid clang  
As on Mount Sinai rang,  
While the red fire and smouldering clouds outbreake:

The aged Earth, aghast  
With terror of that blast,  
Shall from the surface to the centre shake,  
When at the world's last session  
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

## XVIII.

And then at last our bliss  
Full and perfect is,  
But now begins; for from this happy day  
The old Dragon under ground,  
In straiter limits bound,  
Not half so far casts his usurped sway,  
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,  
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

## XIX.

The oracles are dumb;  
No voice or hideous hum  
Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.  
Apollo from his shrine  
Can no more divine,  
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.  
No nightly trance or breathed spell  
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

## XX.

The lonely mountains o'er,  
And the resounding shore,  
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;  
From haunted spring and dale  
Edg'd with poplar pale,  
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;  
With flower-inwoven tresses torn  
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

## XXI.

In consecrated earth,  
And on the holy hearth,  
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint ;  
In urns and altars round,  
A drear and dying sound  
Affrights the flamens at their service quaint ;  
And the chill marble seems to sweat,  
While each peculiar power foregoes his wonted seat.

190

195

## XXII.

Peor and Baälim  
Forsake their temples dim,  
With that twice-batter'd god of Palestine ;  
And mooned Ashtaroth,  
Heaven's queen and mother both,  
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine ;  
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn ;  
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn.

200

## XXIII.

And sullen Moloch, fled,  
Hath left in shadows dread  
His burning idol all of blackest hue ;  
In vain with cymbals' ring  
They call the grisly king,  
In dismal dance about the furnace blue :  
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,  
Isis and Orus and the dog Anubis, haste.

205

210

## XXIV.

Nor is Osiris seen  
In Memphian grove or green,  
Trampling the unshower'd grass with lowings loud ;

215

Nor can he be at rest  
 Within his sacred chest ;  
 Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud ;  
 In vain with timbrell'd anthems dark  
 The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipp'd ark.

220

## xxv.

He feels from Juda's land  
 The dreaded Infant's hand,  
 The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyne ;  
 Nor all the gods beside  
 Longer dare abide,

225

Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine :  
 Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,  
 Can in his swaddling bands control the damned crew.

## xxvi.

So when the sun in bed,  
 Curtain'd with cloudy red,  
 Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,  
 The flocking shadows pale  
 Troop to the infernal jail,  
 Each fetter'd ghost slips to his several grave,  
 And the yellow-skirted fays

230

235

Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-lov'd maze.

## xxvii.

But see ! the Virgin blest  
 Hath laid her Babe to rest.  
 Time is our tedious song should here have ending :  
 Heaven's youngest-teemed star  
 Hath fix'd her polish'd car,  
 Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending ;  
 And all about the courtly stable  
 Bright-harness'd angels sit in order serviceable.

240

## L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSERO.

### INTRODUCTION.

THESE two poems are, perhaps, the best known and best appreciated of any of Milton's lesser works. They were written during the poet's residence at Horton, about 1632. To be understood they must be read together. They are exact counterparts of each other, and a perfect parallelism is maintained throughout. The views of each are meant to be contrasted with the other.

The titles of the two poems are Italian. *L'Allegro* means "the cheerful man;" *Il Pensero*, "the thoughtful man." Although Milton makes mirth the characteristic of one, and melancholy of the other, his mirth is without frivolity, his thoughtfulness without gloom. *L'Allegro* presents the world as it appears to a cheerful man, or, rather, to Milton when in a cheerful frame of mind, for both poems are subjective. *Il Pensero* presents the world as it appears to a thoughtful, serious man, or as it appears to Milton when he takes a serious view of life. The cheerful man likes to go among men, the thoughtful man desires to be alone; the former enjoys the pleasures of the day, the latter looks beneath the surface of things. Both poems are rich in imagery and in pictures of English life, yet it is not difficult to see which portrays the true nature of Milton. Into his portrait of *Il Pensero* he throws himself with his whole soul. We see throughout this poem a reflection of his life.

These lyrics are not to be considered as accurate descriptions of nature. The critic soon perceives that Milton is not an accurate observer of nature, or familiar with country life. "Milton's attitude towards nature," says Rev. Mark Pattison, "is not that of a scientific naturalist, not even that of a close observer. It is that of a poet who feels its total influence too powerfully to dissect

it. . . . He is not concerned to register the facts and phenomena of nature, but to convey the impressions they make on a sensitive soul. The external things are to be presented to us as transformed through the heart and mind of the poet." The poet aims not to show what rural objects are like, but how they affect his mind as a student.

"These two idylls breathe the free air of spring and summer, and of the fields around Horton. They are the choicest expression our language has yet found of the fresh charm of country life, not as that life is lived by the peasant, but as it is felt by a young and lettered student, issuing at early dawn, or at sunset, into the fields from his chamber and his books."

## L'ALLEGRO.

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,  
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born  
In Stygian cave forlorn,  
'Mongst horrid shapes and shrieks and sights unholy !  
Find out some uncouth cell, 5  
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings  
And the night-raven sings ;  
There under ebon shades and low-brow'd rocks,  
As ragged as thy locks,  
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell. 10  
But come, thou goddess fair and free,  
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,  
And by men heart-easing Mirth,  
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,  
With two sister Graces more 15  
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore ;  
Or whether — as some sager sing —  
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,  
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,  
As he met her once a-Maying, 20  
There, on beds of violets blue,  
And fresh-blown roses wash'd in dew,  
Fill'd her with thee, a daughter fair,  
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.  
Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee 25  
Jest and youthful Jollity,  
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,  
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles.

Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,  
And love to live in dimple sleek ;  
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,  
And Laughter holding both his sides.  
Come, and trip it as you go,  
On the light fantastic toe ;  
And in thy right hand lead with thee  
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty ;  
And if I give thee honour due,  
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,  
To live with her and live with thee,  
In unreproved pleasures free : ——————  
To hear the lark begin his flight,  
And singing startle the dull night,  
From his watch-tower in the skies,  
Till the dappled dawn doth rise ;  
Then to come in spite of sorrow,  
And at my window bid good-morrow,  
Through the sweet-briar or the vine,  
Or the twisted eglantine :  
While the cock with lively din  
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,  
And to the stack or the barn-door  
Stoutly struts his dames before :  
Oft listening how the hounds and horn  
Cheerly rouse the slumbering Morn,  
From the side of some hoar hill,  
Through the high wood echoing shrill :  
Sometime walking, not unseen,  
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,  
Right against the eastern gate  
Where the great Sun begins his state,  
Rob'd in flames and amber light,  
The clouds in thousand liveries dight ;  
While the ploughman near at hand

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Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

65

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures  
Whilst the landscape round it measures :

70

Russet lawns and fallows gray,  
Where the nibbling flocks do stray ;  
Mountains on whose barren breast  
The labouring clouds do often rest ;  
Meadows trim with daisies pied,

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Shallow brooks, and rivers wide ;  
Towers and battlements it sees  
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,  
Where perhaps some beauty lies,

80

The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.  
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes  
From betwixt two aged oaks,  
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met  
Are at their savoury dinner set  
Of herbs and other country messes,

85

Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses ;  
And then in haste her bower she leaves ;  
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves,  
Or, if the earlier season lead,  
To the tann'd haycock in the mead.

90

Sometimes with secure delight  
The upland hamlets will invite,  
When the merry bells ring round,  
And the jocund rebecks sound  
To many a youth and many a maid  
Dancing in the chequer'd shade,  
And young and old come forth to play  
On a sunshine holiday,

95

- Till the livelong daylight fail :  
 Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,  
 With stories told of many a feat,  
 How fairy Mab the junkets eat.  
 She was pinch'd and pull'd, she said,  
 And he, by Friar's lantern led,  
 Tells how the drudging goblin sweat  
 To earn his cream-bowl duly set,  
 When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
 His shadowy flail hath thresh'd the corn  
 That ten day-labourers could not end ;  
 Then lies him down, the lubber fiend,  
 And, stretch'd out all the chimney's length,  
 Basks at the fire his hairy strength,  
 And crop-full out of doors he flings  
 Ere the first cock his matin rings.  
 Thus done the tales, to bed they creep  
 By whispering winds soon lull'd asleep.  
 Tower'd cities please us then,  
 And the busy hum of men,  
 Where throngs of knights and barons bold  
 In weeds of peace high triumphs hold,  
 With store of ladies, whose bright eyes  
 Rain influence, and judge the prize  
 Of wit or arms, while both contend  
 To win her grace whom all commend.  
 There let Hymen oft appear  
 In saffron robe, with taper clear,  
 And pomp and feast and revelry,  
 With mask and antique pageantry,  
 Such sights as youthful poets dream  
 On summer eves by haunted stream.  
 Then to the well-trod stage anon,  
 If Jonson's learned sock be on,  
 Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,

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Warble his native wood-notes wild.

And ever, against eating cares,135  
 Lap me in soft Lydian airs,  
 Married to immortal verse,  
 Such as the meeting soul may pierce,  
 In notes with many a winding bout  
 Of linked sweetness long drawn out140  
 With wanton heed and giddy cunning,  
 The melting voice through mazes running,  
 Untwisting all the chains that tie  
 The hidden soul of harmony ;  
 That Orpheus' self may heave his head145  
 From golden slumber on a bed  
 Of heap'd Elysian flowers, and hear  
 Such strains as would have won the ear  
 Of Pluto to have quite set free  
 His half-regain'd Eurydice.150

These delights if thou canst give,  
 Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

## IL PENSERO SO.

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,  
 The brood of Folly without father bred !  
 How little you bestead,  
 Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys !  
 Dwell in some idle brain,5  
 And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,  
 As thick and numberless  
 As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,  
 Or likkest hovering dreams,  
 The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.10

But hail, thou goddess sage and holy,  
 Hail, divinest Melancholy!  
 Whose saintly visage is too bright  
 To hit the sense of human sight,  
 And therefore to our weaker view  
 15 O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;  
 Black, but such as in esteem  
 Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,  
 Or that starr'd Ethiop queen that strove  
 To set her beauty's praise above  
 20 The Sea-Nymphs, and their powers offended.  
 Yet thou art higher far descended:  
 Thee bright-hair'd Vesta long of yore  
 To solitary Saturn bore;  
 His daughter she — in Saturn's reign  
 25 Such mixture was not held a stain.  
 Oft in glimmering bowers and glades  
 He met her, and in secret shades  
 Of woody Ida's inmost grove,  
 While yet there was no fear of Jove.  
 30 ¶ Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,  
 Sober, steadfast, and demure,  
 All in a robe of darkest grain,  
 Flowing with majestic train,  
 And sable stole of cypress lawn  
 35 Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
 Come, but keep thy wonted state,  
 With even step and musing gait,  
 And looks commerçeing with the skies,  
 Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:  
 40 There, held in holy passion still,  
 Forget thyself to marble, till  
 With a sad leaden downward cast  
 Thou fix them on the earth as fast.  
 And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,  
 45

Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,  
 And hears the Muses in a ring  
 Aye round about Jove's altar sing ;  
 And add to these retired Leisure,  
 That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;      50  
 But, first and chiepest, with thee bring  
 Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
 Guiding the fiery-wheel'd throne,  
 The Cherub Contemplation ;  
 And the mute Silence hist along,      55  
 'Less Philomel will deign a song  
 In her sweetest, saddest plight,  
 Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,  
 While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke  
 Gently o'er the accustom'd oak ;      60  
 Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
 Most musical, most melancholy !  
 Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among  
 I woo, to hear thy even-song ;  
 And, missing thee, I walk unseen      65  
 On the dry smooth-shaven green,  
 To behold the wandering moon,  
 Riding near her highest noon,  
 Like one that had been led astray  
 Through the heaven's wide pathless way,      70  
 And oft, as if her head she bow'd,  
 Stooping through a fleecy cloud.  
 Oft on a plat of rising ground,  
 I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
 Over some wide-water'd shore,      75  
 Swinging slow with sullen roar ;  
 Or if the air will not permit,  
 Some still removed place will fit,  
 Where glowing embers through the room  
 Teach light to counterfeit a gloom ;      80

Far from all resort of mirth,  
Save the cricket on the hearth,  
Or the bellman's drowsy charm  
To bless the doors from nightly harm.

Or let my lamp at midnight hour  
Be seen in some high lonely tower,  
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,  
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere  
The spirit of Plato, to unfold  
What worlds or what vast regions hold  
The immortal mind that hath forsook  
Her mansion in this fleshly nook ;  
And of those demons that are found  
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,  
Whose power hath a true consent  
With planet or with element.

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy  
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,  
Presenting Thebes or Pelops' line,  
Or the tale of Troy divine,  
Or what — though rare — of later age  
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.

But, O sad virgin, that thy power  
Might raise Musæus from his bower,  
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing  
Such notes as, warbled to the string,  
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,  
And made Hell grant what love did seek !  
Or call up him that left half-told  
The story of Cambuscan bold,  
Of Camball and of Algarsife,  
And who had Canace to wife,  
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass,  
And of the wondrous horse of brass  
On which the Tartar king did ride ;

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And if aught else great bards beside  
 In sage and solemn tunes have sung,  
 Of turneys and of trophies hung,  
 Of forests and enchantments drear,  
 Where more is meant than meets the ear. 120

Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,  
 Till civil-suited Morn appear,  
 Not trick'd and frounc'd as she was wont  
 With the Attic boy to hunt,  
 But kerchief'd in a comely cloud, 125  
 While rocking winds are piping loud,  
 Or usher'd with a shower still,  
 When the gust hath blown his fill,  
 Ending on the rustling leaves  
 With minute-drops from off the eaves. 130

And when the sun begins to fling  
 His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring  
 To arched walks of twilight groves,  
 And shadows brown that Silvan loves  
 Of pine or monumental oak, 135  
 Where the rude axe with heaved stroke  
 Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,  
 Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt.  
 There in close covert by some brook,

Where no profaner eye may look, 140  
 Hide me from day's garish eye,  
 'While the bee with honey'd thigh,  
 That at her flowery work doth sing,  
 And the waters murmuring,  
 With such consort as they keep, 145  
 Entice the dewy-feather'd Sleep ;  
 And let some strange mysterious dream  
 Wave at his wings in airy stream  
 Of lively portraiture display'd,  
 Softly on my eyelids laid. 150

And, as I wake, sweet music breathe  
 Above, about, or underneath,  
 Sent by some spirit to mortals good,  
 Or the unseen Genius of the wood.

But let my due feet never fail  
 To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
 And love the high embowed roof,  
 With antique pillars massy-proof,  
 And storied windows richly dight,  
 Casting a dim religious light.

There let the pealing organ blow  
 To the full-voic'd quire below,  
 In service high and anthems clear,  
 As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
 Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
 And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

And may at last my weary age  
 Find out the peaceful hermitage,  
 The hairy gown and mossy cell,  
 Where I may sit and rightly spell  
 Of every star that heaven doth show,  
 And every herb that sips the dew,  
 Till old experience do attain  
 To something like prophetic strain.

These pleasures, Melancholy, give,  
 And I with thee will choose to live.

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## COMUS.

### INTRODUCTION.

IN the golden age of the English drama, when Shakespeare was producing his matchless plays with little or no scenery, Ben Jonson and a host of others were delighting the nobility and upper classes with a widely different species of dramatic composition, which laid under tribute all the skill of the stage architect, and the resources of the greatest musicians. This was the Masque, the precursor, perhaps, of the modern opera, embodying, as it did in its highest development, poetic dialogue, lyric song, music, and dancing. Of its wealth of display we may get some idea from the spectacular productions of the modern stage.

The English Masque was undoubtedly an importation from Italy, and had its origin in the masques and pageants so prevalent in that country during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As may be readily surmised, the performers wore masques or vizards. Gradually the masque and pageant were combined, and from this combination came the English Masque. We find little mention of it in English chronicle until the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when it seems to have become a pleasing form of entertainment in court circles.

Concerning the nature of the Elizabethan Masque our information is indeed scant. We get the best idea, perhaps, from Scott's Kenilworth, where Elizabeth pays a royal visit to the castle of her favorite Leicester, and is entertained with a masque. So far as we know, the masque of this period was strongly spectacular, wherein poetry played only a subsidiary part, serving as a framework on which to hang gorgeous spectacle. Great attention was paid to the costumes, dancing, and music. The characters assumed were allegorical and mythological.

In the reign of James I., poetry assumed its proper place, and elevated the Masque to the dignity of literature. Music and spectacle still counted for much, but it was due to Ben Jonson, the foremost of masque-writers, that they were subordinated to the literary element. "The Masque," maintained Jonson, "should be grounded on solid learning, should carry a mixture of profit no less than delight." It should be the vehicle of what is best in thought and verse. Such was the Masque at the time of Milton; and of such *Comus* stands as the highest exemplar in all literature.

The Masque was an entertainment peculiar to the nobility and to wealthy societies. Of necessity it could not be popular. The expense attending such a production was enormous. The musical and artistic features were of the highest order, to be appreciated only by the cultured eye and ear. The characters were chiefly mythological, and could be of little interest to a popular audience. Even by those who could afford them, Masques were produced only on occasions of great ceremony, such as marriage festivals, birthdays, or receptions of the nobility.

The Masque of *Comus* was produced under the following circumstances. John Egerton, Earl of Bridgewater, had been appointed Lord President of Wales in 1633. He entered on his duties the following year, and in honor of the event held a great celebration at Ludlow Castle, his official residence. Henry Lawes, a distinguished musician of the time, was commissioned to furnish a masque for the occasion. Lawes himself composed the music, and applied to Milton to write the poetry to accompany it. Milton accepted the invitation, and produced *Comus*. It was performed at Ludlow Castle on Michaelmas Night (Sept. 29), 1634. Mr. Lawes took the part of the Attendant Spirit, and the Earl's three children, Lady Alice Egerton, Viscount Brackley, and Mr. Thomas Egerton, were the Lady and the two Brothers. It is not known who took the parts of Comus and Sabrina.

We have no record of the success of the production, but it is known that Lawes was so importuned for copies of the play that in 1637 he published it. Milton's name was not as yet used in connection with the poem. He first acknowledges himself to be the author in the 1645 edition of his poems. It is also interest-

ing to note that in neither the 1645 nor the 1673 edition does Milton give the name of *Comus* to the poem. This name is a later title, where or by whom given is not known. Milton called it simply a *A Masque presented at Ludlow Castle*.

The materials from which the poem is constructed are evidently not original with Milton. The story of the poem was probably suggested by George Peele's *Old Wives Tale*, the character of *Comus* from an old Latin extravaganza called *Comus*, by a Dutchman, Hendrik Van der Putten, and that of *Sabrina* from Giles Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*. For the Circe-myth Milton had recourse to the *Odyssey*. For all that, Milton is not to be reckoned as a plagiarist. The work is distinctly his own. If he has borrowed, he has borrowed only to enlarge and beautify. The whole conception of the poem and the development of the plot are Milton's. The beauty and music of the lyrics, the majesty and dignity of the thought, the moral application, give to the whole a distinctly Miltonic flavor.

Of the grandeur of the poem too much cannot be said. It is the grandest of Milton's minor poems. He has contrived, under the guise of a masque, full of local color and incident, to teach a high spiritual lesson, the mastery of a virtuous mind over sensual indulgence, a theme ever dominant in his own philosophy. Left to his own resources he has written with a free hand, developing his story in his own way, and has produced a masque which, in poetical beauty, artistic construction, and sweet moral influence, is without a superior.

Metrically *Comus* is of interest, as the first poem in which Milton uses blank verse, the distinguishing characteristic of which is that use of what Masson terms "*free musical paragraph*," where the idea is not conveyed in single lines or couplets, but in combinations of verses or verse paragraphs. We must notice, also, that many of the verses have an extra syllable at the close. The same is found in Milton's later poems, but not to such an extent. The lyrics are for the most part iambic tetrameters, a measure much used by the other masque-writers of that day. There are, however, many irregular verses and rhymes, but these serve rather to heighten the beauty of the songs than to detract from them.

# COMUS.

## A MASQUE.

PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE, 1634, BEFORE JOHN, EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, THEN PRESIDENT OF WALES.

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### THE PERSONS.

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, afterwards in the habit of THYRSIS.  
COMUS with his crew.

The LADY.

FIRST BROTHER.

SECOND BROTHER.

SABRINA, the Nymph.

The Chief Persons which presented were :—

THE LORD BRACKLEY.

MR. THOMAS EGERTON, his Brother.

THE LADY ALICE EGERTON.

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*The First Scene Discovers a Wild Wood.*

*The ATTENDANT SPIRIT descends or enters.*

*Spirit.* Before the starry threshold of Jove's court  
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes o  
Of bright aerial spirits live inspher'd o  
In regions mild of calm and serene air,  
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot  
Which men call Earth, and with low-thoughted care,  
Confin'd and pester'd in this pinfold here, o  
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,  
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,  
After this mortal change, to her true servants.

5

10

Amongst the enthron'd gods on sainted seats.  
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire  
To lay their just hands on that golden key  
That opes the palace of eternity.

To such my errand is; and but for such  
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds  
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.

15

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway  
Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,  
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove  
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles  
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay  
The unadorned bosom of the deep;  
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,

20

By course commits to several government,  
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,  
And wield their little tridents. But this isle,  
The greatest and the best of all the main,  
He quarters to his blue-hair'd deities;

25

And all this tract that fronts the falling sun  
A noble peer of mickle trust and power  
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide  
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms  
Where his fair offspring, nurs'd in princely lore,

30

Are coming to attend their father's state  
And new-intrusted sceptre. But their way  
Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood,

35

The nodding horror of whose shady brows  
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;  
And here their tender age might suffer peril,  
But that by quick command from sovran Jove  
I was dispatch'd for their defence and guard;

40

And listen why, for I will tell you now  
What never yet was heard in tale or song,  
From old or modern bard in hall or bower.

45

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape  
 Crush'd the sweet poison of misused wine,  
 After the Tuscan mariners transform'd,  
 Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed  
 On Circe's island fell. Who knows not Circe,  
 The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup  
 Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,  
 And downward fell into a grovelling swine? —  
 This nymph, that gaz'd upon his clustering locks,  
 With ivy berries wreath'd, and his blithe youth,  
 Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son  
 Much like his father, but his mother more,  
 Whom therefore she brought up and Comus nam'd;  
 Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,  
 Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,  
 At last betakes him to this ominous wood,  
 And in thick shelter of black shades embower'd  
 Excels his mother at her mighty art,  
 Offering to every weary traveller  
 His orient liquor in a crystal glass, o  
 To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which as they taste —  
 For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst —  
 Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,  
 The express resemblance of the gods, is chang'd  
 Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,  
 Or ounce or tiger, hog or bearded goat,  
 All other parts remaining as they were;  
 And they, so perfect is their misery,  
 Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,  
 But boast themselves more comely than before,  
 And all their friends and native home forget,  
 To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.  
 Therefore, when any favour'd of high Jove  
 Chances to pass this adventurous glade,  
 Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star

50

55

60

65

70

75

80

I shoot from heaven to give him safe convoy,  
 As now I do. But first I must put off  
 These my sky-robes spun out of Iris' woof, o  
 And take the weeds and likeness of a swain  
 That to the service of this house belongs,  
 Who with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song  
 Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar  
 And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith, o  
 And in this office of his mountain watch  
 Likeliest and nearest to the present aid  
 Of this occasion. But I hear the tread  
 Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

85

90

*Comus enters with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

*Comus.* The star that bids the shepherd fold o  
 Now the top of heaven doth hold;  
 And the gilded car of day }  
 His glowing axle doth allay }  
 In the steep Atlantic stream }  
 And the slope sun his upward beam o  
 Shoots against the dusky pole, o  
 Pacing toward the other goal }  
 Of his chamber in the east. }  
 Meanwhile welcome joy and feast, }  
 Midnight shout and revelry, }  
 Tipsy dance and jollity. }  
 Braid your locks with rosy twine, o  
 Dropping odours, dropping wine.  
 Rigour now is gone to bed;  
 And Advice with scrupulous head,  
 Age, and sour Severity,

95

100

105

With their grave saws in slumber lie.<sup>o</sup>

110

We that are of purer fire<sup>o</sup>

Imitate the starry quire,<sup>o</sup>

Who in their nightly watchful spheres

Lead in swift round the months and years.

The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,<sup>o</sup>

115

Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;<sup>o</sup>

And on the tawny sands and shelves

Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.<sup>o</sup>

By dimpled brook and fountain brim

The wood-nymphs, deck'd with daisies trim,

120

Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:<sup>o</sup>

What hath night to do with sleep?

Night hath better sweets to prove;

Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.

Come, let us our rites begin;

125

'Tis only daylight that makes sin,

Which these dun shades will ne'er report.<sup>o</sup>

Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,

Dark-veil'd Cotytto, to whom the secret flame<sup>o</sup>

130

Of midnight torches burns! mysterious dame,

That ne'er art call'd but when the dragon womb

/ Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,<sup>o</sup>

And makes one blot of all the air!

Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,

Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat, and befriend<sup>o</sup>

135

Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end

Of all thy dues be done, and none left out,

Ere the blabbing eastern scout,

The nice Morn on the Indian steep,<sup>o</sup>

From her cabin'd loophole peep,<sup>o</sup>

And to the tell-tale Sun descry

Our conceal'd solemnity.

Come, knit hands, and beat the ground

In a light fantastic round.<sup>o</sup>

140

*The Measure.*

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace o  
 Of some chaste footing near about this ground.  
 Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees ; o  
 Our number may affright. Some virgin sure —  
 For so I can distinguish by mine art —  
 Benighted in these woods ! Now to my charms, 145  
 And to my wily trains ; I shall ere long o  
 Be well stock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd  
 About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl } o  
 My dazzling spells into the spongy air,  
 Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion, o  
 And give it false presentments, lest the place 155  
 And my quaint habits breed astonishment, o  
 And put the damsel to suspicious flight ;  
 Which must not be, for that's against my course.  
 I, under fair pretence of friendly ends, 160  
 And well-plac'd words of glozing courtesy, o  
 Baited with reasons not unplausible,  
 Wind me into the easy-hearted man,  
 And hug him into snares. When once her eye  
 Hath met the virtue of this magic dust, 165  
 I shall appear some harmless villager  
 Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear. o  
 But here she comes ; I fairly step aside,  
 And hearken if I may her business hear. ?

*The LADY enters.*

*Lady.* This way the noise was, if mine ear be true, 170  
 My best guide now ; methought it was the sound  
 Of riot and ill-manag'd merriment,  
 Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe  
 Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds, o  
 When, for their teeming flocks and granges full, 175  
 In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan, o

And thank the gods amiss. I should be loath  
 To meet the rudeness and swill'd insolence  
 Of such late wassailers ; yet O, where else  
 Shall I inform my unacquainted feet

180

In the blind mazes of this tangled wood ?

My brothers, when they saw me wearied out  
 With this long way, resolving here to lodge  
 Under the spreading favour of these pines,  
 Stepp'd, as they said, to the next thicket side

185

To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit  
 As the kind hospitable woods provide.

They left me then when the gray-hooded Even,  
 (Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,

190

Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain)

But where they are, and why they came not back,  
 Is now the labour of my thoughts ; 'tis likeliest

They had engag'd their wandering steps too far,  
 And envious darkness, ere they could return,

Had stole them from me : else, O thievish Night,  
 Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,

195

In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars  
 That Nature hung in heaven, and fill'd their lamps  
 With everlasting oil, to give due light

To the misled and lonely traveller ?

200

This is the place, as well as I may guess,  
 Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth

Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear,  
 Yet nought but single darkness do I find.

What might this be ? A thousand fantasies  
 Begin to throng into my memory,

205

Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,

And airy tongues that syllable men's names  
 On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.

These thoughts may startle well, but not astound  
 The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended

210

By a strong siding champion, Conscience.  
 O, welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,  
 Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,  
 And thou unblemish'd form of Chastity ! 215  
 I see ye visibly, and now believe  
 That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill  
 Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,  
 Would send a (glistening guardian) if need were,  
 To keep my life and honour unassail'd. — 220  
 Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud  
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night ?  
 I did not err ; there does a sable cloud )  
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night, )  
 And casts a gleam over this tufted grove. 225  
 I cannot halloo to my brothers, but  
 Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest  
 I'll venture ; for my new-enliven'd spirits  
 Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

## SONG.

*Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen — 230  
 Within thy airy shell —  
 By slow Meander's margent green,  
 And in the violet-embroider'd vale  
 Where the love-lorn nightingale —  
 Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well ; 235  
 Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair  
 That likest thy Narcissus are ? —  
 O, if thou have  
 Hid them in some flowery cave,  
 Tell me but where,* 240  
*Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere ! —  
 So mayst thou be translated to the skies,  
 And give resounding grace to all heaven's harmonies ! —*

## Enter Comus.

*Comus.* Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould  
 Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment? — 245  
 Sure something holy lodges in that breast,  
 And with these raptures moves the vocal air  
 To testify his hidden residence.  
 How sweetly did they float upon the wings  
 Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night, — 250  
 At every fall smoothing the raven down —  
 Of darkness till it smil'd ! I have oft heard  
 My mother Circe with the Sirens three,  
 Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,  
 Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs, — 255  
 Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,  
 And lap it in Elysium ; Scylla wept,  
 And chid her barking waves into attention,  
 And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause.  
 Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense, — 260  
 And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself ;  
 But such a sacred and home-felt delight,  
 Such sober certainty of waking bliss,  
 I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,  
 And she shall be my queen. — Hail, foreign wonder ! — 265  
 Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,  
 Unless the goddess that in rural shrine —  
 Dwell'st here with Pan or Silvan, by blest song —  
 Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog  
 To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood. — 270

*Lady.* Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise —  
 That is address'd to unattending ears.)  
 Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift  
 How to regain my sever'd company,  
 Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo — 275  
 To give me answer from her mossy couch.

*Comus.* What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus ?

*Lady.* Dim darkness and this leavy labyrinth. —

*Comus.* Could that divide you from near-ushering guides ?

*Lady.* They left me weary on a grassy turf. 280

*Comus.* By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why ?

*Lady.* To seek i' the valley some cool friendly spring.

*Comus.* And left your fair side all unguarded, lady ?

*Lady.* They were but twain, and purpos'd quick return.

*Comus.* Perhaps forestalling night prevented them. 285

*Lady.* How easy my misfortune is to hit !

*Comus.* Imports their loss beside the present need ?

*Lady.* No less than if I should my brothers lose.

*Comus.* Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom ?

*Lady.* As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips. 290

*Comus.* Two such I saw, what time the labour'd ox —

In his loose traces from the furrow came,

And the swink'd hedger at his supper sat. —

I saw them under a green mantling vine

That crawls along the side of yon small hill,

295

Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots ;

Their port was more than human, as they stood

I took it for a fairy vision

Of some gay creatures of the element,

300

That in the colours of the rainbow live,

And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-strook,

And, as I pass'd, I worshipp'd. If those you seek,

It were a journey like the path to heaven

To help you find them.

*Lady.* Gentle villager,

What readiest way would bring me to that place ? 305

*Comus.* Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

*Lady.* To find that out, good shepherd, I suppose,

In such a scant allowance of starlight,

Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,

Without the sure guess of well-practis'd feet.

310

*Comus.* I know each lane, and every alley green,  
 Dingle or bushy dell of this wild wood,  
 And every bosky bourn from side to side,  
 My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood ;  
 And if your stray attendance be yet lodg'd —  
 Or shroud within these limits, I shall know  
 Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark  
 From her thatch'd pallet rouse. If otherwise  
 I can conduct you, lady, to a low  
 But loyal cottage, where you may be safe  
 Till further quest.

315

320

*Lady.* ( Shepherd, I take thy word,  
 And trust thy honest-offer'd courtesy,  
 Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds  
 With smoky rafters than in tapestry halls  
 And courts of princes, where it first was nam'd,  
 And yet is most pretended.) In a place  
 Less warranted than this, or less secure,  
 I cannot be, that I should fear to change it. —  
 Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial —  
 To my proportion'd strength ! — Shepherd, lead on.

325

330

*Enter the two BROTHERS.*

*First Brother.* Unmuffle, ye faint stars, and thou, fair  
 moon,  
 That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,  
 Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,  
 And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here —  
 In double night of darkness and of shades ;  
 Or if your influence be quite damm'd up  
 With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,  
 Though a rush candle from the wicker hole  
 Of some clay habitation, visit us  
 With thy long levell'd rule of streaming light,  
 And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,  
 Or Tyrian Cynosure.

335

340

*Second Brother.*      Or if our eyes  
 Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear  
 The folded flocks penn'd in their wattled cotes,  
 Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops, —  
 Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock  
 Count the night watches to his feathery dames,  
 'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,  
 In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs  
 But O that hapless virgin, our lost sister !

345

350

355

Where may she wander now, whither betake her  
 From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles ?  
 Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,  
 Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm  
 Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.  
 (What if in wild amazement and affright, —  
 Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp  
 Of savage hunger or of savage heat ?)

360

365

370

375

*First Brother.* Peace, brother, be not over-exquisite  
 To cast the fashion of uncertain evils ; —  
 For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,  
 What need a man forestall his date of grief,  
 And run to meet what he would most avoid ?  
 Or if they be but false alarms of fear,  
 How bitter is such self-delusion ! )  
 I do not think my sister so to seek, —  
 Or so unprincipled in virtue's book, —  
 And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,  
 As that the single want of light and noise —  
 Not being in danger, as I trust she is not —  
 Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,  
 And put them into misbecoming plight. —  
 Virtue could see to do what Virtue would  
 By her own radiant light, though sun and moon  
 Were in the flat sea sunk. ) And Wisdom's self  
 Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,

Where, with her best nurse Contemplation,  
 She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,  
 That in the various bustle of resort  
 Were all to-ruffled and sometimes impair'd.  
 He that has light within his own clear breast  
 May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day :  
 But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts  
 Benighted walks under the mid-day sun ;  
 Himself is his own dungeon.

380

*Second Brother.*                    'Tis most true  
 That inusing Meditation most affects  
 The pensive secrecy of desert cell,  
 Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,  
 And sits as safe as in a senate-house ;  
 For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,  
 His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,  
 Or do his gray hairs any violence ?  
 But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree  
 Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard  
 Of dragon watch with unenchanted eye,  
 To save her blossoms and defend her fruit  
 From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.

385

You may as well spread out the unsun'd heaps  
 Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,  
 And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope  
 Danger will wink on opportunity,  
 And let a single helpless maiden pass  
 Uninjur'd in this wild surrounding waste.  
 Of night or loneliness it recks me not ;  
 I fear the dread events that dog them both,  
 Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person  
 Of our unowned sister.

390

395

400

405

*First Brother.*                    I do not, brother,  
 Infer as if I thought my sister's state  
 Secure without all doubt or controversy ;

Yet where an equal poise of hope and fear  
 Does arbitrate the event, my nature is  
 That I incline to hope rather than fear,  
 And gladly banish squint suspicion.  
 My sister is not so defenceless left  
 As you imagine; she has a hidden strength  
 Which you remember not.

410

415

*Second Brother.* What hidden strength,  
 Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

*First Brother.* I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength  
 Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own.

Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:

420

She that has that is clad in complete steel,  
 And, like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen,  
 May trace huge forests and unharbour'd heaths,  
 Infamous hills and sandy perilous wilds,  
 Where through the sacred rays of chastity  
 No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer  
 Will dare to soil her virgin purity.

425

Yea, there where very desolation dwells,  
 By grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades  
 She may pass on with unblench'd majesty,  
 Be it not done in pride or in presumption.

430

Some say no evil thing that walks by night,  
 In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,  
 Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost  
 That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,  
 No goblin or swart fairy of the mine,  
 Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.

435

Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call  
 Antiquity from the old schools of Greece  
 To testify the arms of chastity?

440

Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,  
 Fair silver-shafted queen for ever chaste,  
 Wherewith she tam'd the brinded lioness

And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought  
The frivolous bolt of Cupid ; gods and men  
Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.  
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield  
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,  
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone, ~~she~~  
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,  
And noble grace that dash'd brute violence  
With sudden adoration and blank awe ? )  
So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity  
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,  
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,  
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,  
And in clear dream and solemn vision  
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear ;  
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants  
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,  
The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,  
Till all be made immortal : but when lust,  
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,  
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,  
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,  
The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
Imbodies and imbrutes, till she quite lose  
The divine property of her first being.  
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp  
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,  
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,  
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,  
And link'd itself by carnal sensuality  
To a degenerate and degraded state. |||

*Second Brother.* How charming is divine philosophy !  
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,  
But musical as is Apollo's lute,

And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,  
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

*First Brother.* List, list ! I hear 480

Some far-off halloo break the silent air.

*Second Brother.* Methought so too ; what should it be ?

*First Brother.* For certain

Either some one like us night-founder'd here,  
Or else some neighbour woodman, or at worst  
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.

485

*Second Brother.* Heaven keep my sister ! Again, again,  
and near !

Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

*First Brother.* I'll halloo

If he be friendly, he comes well ; if not,  
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us !

*Enter the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, habited like a shepherd.*

That halloo I should know. What are you ? speak. 490  
Come not too near ; you fall on iron stakes else.

*Spirit.* What voice is that ? my young lord ? speak  
again.

*Second Brother.* O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd,  
sure !

*First Brother.* Thyrsis ! whose artful strains have oft  
delay'd , , ,

The huddling brook to hear his madrigal, 495  
And sweeten'd every musk-rose of the dale.

How cam'st thou here, good swain ? Hath any ram  
Slipt from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,

Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook ?

How could'st thou find this dark sequester'd nook ? 500

*Spirit.* O my lov'd master's heir, and his next joy,  
I came not here on such a trivial toy

As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth  
Of pilfering wolf ; not all the fleecy wealth

That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought  
 To this my errand, and the care it brought.  
 But O, my virgin lady, where is she ?  
 How chance she is not in your company ?

*First Brother.* To tell thee sadly, shepherd, without blame  
 Or our neglect, we lost her as we came. 510

*Spirit.* Ay me unhappy ! then my fears are true !

*First Brother.* What fears, good Thyrsis ? Prithee  
 briefly show.

~~He~~ *Spirit.* I'll tell ye : 'tis not vain or fabulous,  
 Though so esteem'd, by shallow ignorance,  
 What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse, — 515  
 Storied of old in high immortal verse  
 Of dire Chimeras and enchanted isles, —  
 And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell ;  
 For such there be, but unbelief is blind.

Within the navel of this hideous wood, — 520  
 Immur'd in cypress shades a sorcerer dwells,  
 Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,  
 Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries ;  
 And here to every thirsty wanderer  
 By sly enticement gives his baneful cup, 525  
 With many murmurs mix'd, whose pleasing poison --  
 The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,  
 And the inglorious likeness of a beast  
 Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage --  
 Character'd in the face. This I have learnt — 530  
 Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts —  
 That brow this bottom-glade ; whence night by night  
 He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl  
 Like stabled wolves or tigers at their prey, —  
 Doing abhorred rites to Hecate 535  
 In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.  
 Yet have they many baits and guileful spells  
 To inveigle and invite the unwary sense

Of them that pass unweeting by the way. —  
 This evening late, by then the chewing flocks — 540  
 Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb  
 Of knot-grass dew-besprent and were in fold,  
 I sat me down to watch upon a bank  
 With ivy canopied and interwove  
 With flaunting honeysuckle, and began, 545  
 Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,  
 To meditate my rural minstrelsy, —  
 Till fancy had her fill: but ere a close —  
 The wonted roar was up amidst the woods, —  
 And filled the air with barbarous dissonance; 550  
 At which I ceas'd, and listen'd them a while, —  
 Till an unusual stop of sudden silence —  
 Gave respite to the drowsy frightened steeds,  
 That draw the litter of close-curtain'd Sleep.  
 At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound 555  
 Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,  
 And stole upon the air, that even (Silence  
 Was took ere she was ware, and wish'd she might  
 Deny her nature and be never more,  
 Still to be so displac'd.) I was all ear, — 560 }  
 And took in strains that might create a soul } —  
 Under the ribs of Death;) but O, ere long }  
 Too well I did perceive it was the voice  
 Of my most honour'd lady, your dear sister.  
 Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with grief and fear; 565  
 And 'O poor hapless nightingale,' thought I,  
 'How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare! —'  
 Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste, —  
 Through paths and turnings often trod by day,  
 Till guided by mine ear I found the place, 570  
 Where that damn'd wizard, hid in sly disguise —  
 For so by certain signs I knew — had met  
 Already, ere my best speed could prevent,

The aidless innocent lady, his wish'd prey ;  
 Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,  
 Supposing him some neighbour villager.  
 Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd  
 Ye were the two she meant ; with that I sprung  
 Into swift flight, till I had found you here,  
 But further know I not.

575

*Second Brother.* O night and shades,  
 How are ye join'd with Hell in triple knot,  
 Against the unarm'd weakness of one virgin,  
 Alone and helpless ! Is this the confidence  
 You gave me, brother ?

580

*First Brother.* Yes, and keep it still ;  
 Lean on it safely : not a period —  
 Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats  
 Of malice or of sorcery, or that power  
 Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm :

585

{ Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,  
 Surpris'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd ; )  
 Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm —  
 Shall in the happy trial prove most glory :  
 But evil on itself shall back recoil,

590

And mix no more with goodness, when at last,  
 Gather'd like scum and settled to itself,  
 It shall be in eternal restless change  
 Self-fed and self-consumed. If this fail,  
 The pillar'd firmament is rottenness, —

595

And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on !  
 Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven  
 May never this just sword be lifted up ;  
 But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt  
 With all the grisly legions that troop

600

Under the sooty flag of Acheron, —  
 Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms —  
 'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out. —

605

And force him to return his purchase back, —  
 Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,  
 Curs'd as his life.

*Spirit.*            Alas! good venturous youth,  
 I love thy courage yet and bold emprise ;            610  
 But here thy sword can do thee little stead: —  
 Far other arms and other weapons must  
 Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.  
 He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints, —  
 And crumble all thy sinews.

*First Brother.*       Why, prithee, shepherd,            615  
 How durst thou then thyself approach so near  
 As to make this relation?

*Spirit.*            Care and utmost shifts  
 How to secure the lady from surprisal —  
 (Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,            620  
 Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd  
 In every virtuous plant and healing herb —  
 That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray,  
 He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing;  
 Which when I did, he on the tender grass  
 Would sit and hearken e'en to ecstasy,            625  
 And in requital ope his leatherne scrip, —  
 And show me simples of a thousand names,  
 Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.)

Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,  
 But of divine effect, he cull'd me out.            630

//The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,  
 But in another country, as he said,  
 Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil :  
 Unknown, and like esteem'd, and the dull swain  
 Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon;  
 And yet more med'cinal is it than that moly            635  
 That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.  
 He call'd it hæmony, and gave it me,

And bade me keep it as of sovran use  
 'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,  
 Or ghastly Furies' apparition. ~~✓ ✓ / -~~ 640  
 I purs'd it up, but little reckoning made,  
 Till now that this extremity compell'd ;  
 But now I find it true, for by this means  
 I knew the foul enchanter though disguis'd,  
 Enter'd the very lime-twigs of his spells, 645  
 And yet came off. If you have this about you —  
 As I will give you when we go — you may  
 Boldly assault the necromancer's hall ;  
 Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood  
 And brandish'd blade rush on him, break his glass, 650  
 And shed the luscious liquor on the ground,  
 But seize his wand. Though he and his curs'd crew  
 Fierce signs of battle make and menace high,  
 Or, like the sons of Vulcan, vomit smoke,  
 Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink. 655

*First Brother.* Thyrsis, lead on apace ; I'll follow thee,  
 And some good angel bear a shield before us !

*The Scene changes to a stately Palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness ; soft music, tables spread with all dainties. Comus appears with his rabble, and the LADY set in an enchanted chair ; to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

*Comus.* Nay, lady, sit ; if I but wave this wand,  
 Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,  
 And you a statue, or as Daphne was, 660  
 Root-bound, that fled Apollo. ~~hence~~

*Lady.* Fool, do not boast ;  
 Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind  
 With all thy charms, although this corporal rind  
 Thou hast immanacled while Heaven sees good. 665

*Comus.* Why are you vexed, lady ? why do you frown ?

Here dwell no frowns nor anger ; from these gates  
 Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures  
 That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,  
 When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns  
 Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.

670

And first behold this cordial julep here,  
 That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,  
 With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mix'd.  
 Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone  
 In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena  
 Is of such power to stir up joy as this,  
 To life so friendly or so cool to thirst.

675

Why should you be so cruel to yourself,  
 And to those dainty limbs which Nature lent  
 For gentle usage and soft delicacy ?  
 But you invert the covenants of her trust,  
 And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,  
 With that whitch you receiv'd on other terms ;  
 Scorning the unexempt condition  
 By which all mortal frailty must subsist,  
 Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,  
 That have been tir'd all day without repast,  
 And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,  
 This will restore all soon.

680

685

*Lady.*                                    'Twill not, false traitor !  
 'Twill not restore the truth and honesty  
 That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with lies.  
 Was this the cottage and the safe abode  
 Thou told'st me of ? What grim aspects are these,  
 These ugly-headed monsters ? Mercy guard me !  
 Hence with thy brew'd enchantments, foul deceiver !  
 Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence  
 With visor'd falsehood and base forgery ?  
 And wouldest thou seek again to trap me here  
 With liquorish baits fit to ensnare a brute ?

690

695

700

Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,  
 I would not taste thy treasonous offer. ( None  
 But such as are good men can give good things ;  
 And that which is not good is not delicious  
 To a well-govern'd and wise appetite. )

705

~~Comus.~~ O foolishness of men ! that lend their ears  
 To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,

And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,  
 Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence !

Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth

710

With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,

Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,

Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,

But all to please and sate the curious taste ?

And set to work millions of spinning worms,

715

That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk

To deck her sons ; and that no corner might

Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins

She hutch'd the all-worshipp'd ore and precious gems —

To store her children with. If all the world

720

Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,

Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,

The All-giver would be unthank'd, would be unprais'd,

Not half his riches known, and yet despis'd ;

And we should serve him as a grudging master,

725

As a penurious niggard of his wealth,

And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,

Who would be quite surcharg'd with her own weight,

And strangled with her waste fertility :

The earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark'd with plumes,

The herds would over-magnitude their lords,

731

The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamonds —

Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,

And so bestud with stars, that they below —

Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last

735

To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.  
 List, lady ; be not coy, and be not cozen'd  
 With that same vaunted name, Virginity.  
 Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,  
 But must be current ; and the good thereof  
 Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,  
 Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself. 740

If you let slip time, like a neglected rose  
 It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.  
 Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown  
 In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,  
 Where most may wonder at the workmanship. 745

It is for homely features to keep home ;  
 They had their name thence ; coarse complexions  
 And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply —  
 The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool. — 750

What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that,  
 Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn ?  
 There was another meaning in these gifts :  
 Think what, and be advis'd ; you are but young yet. 755

*Lady.* ( I had not thought to have unlock'd my lips  
 In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler  
 Would think to charm my judgment as mine eyes,  
 Obtruding false rules prank'd in reason's garb. —  
 I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,  
 And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.) 760

Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature,  
 As if she would her children should be riotous  
 With her abundance. She, good cateress, —  
 Means her provision only to the good,  
 That live according to her sober laws  
 And holy dictate of spare Temperance. — 765

If every just man that now pines with want  
 Had but a moderate and beseeming share  
 Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury 770

Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,  
 Nature's full blessings would be well dispense'd  
 In unsuperfluous even proportion, —  
 And she no wit encumber'd with her store :  
 And then the Giver would be better thank'd,  
 His praise due paid ; for swinish Gluttony  
 Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,  
 But with besotted base ingratitude  
 Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on ?

775

Or have I said enough ? To him that dares

780

Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words  
 Against the sun-clad power of chastity, —  
 Fain would I something say, yet to what end ?  
 Thou hast nor ear nor soul to apprehend —

The sublime notion and high mystery —

785

That must be utter'd to unfold the sage

And serious doctrine of Virginity ;

And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know —  
 More happiness than this thy present lot.

Enjoy your dear wit and gay rhetoric,

790

That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence ;

Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd.

Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth —

Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits

To such a flame of sacred vehemence

795

That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,

And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,

Till all thy magic structures rear'd so high

Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.

*Comus.* She fables not. I feel that I do fear —

800

Her words set off by some superior power :

And, though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew

Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove

Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus —

To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,

805

And try her yet more strongly)—Come, no more!  
This is mere moral babble, and direct  
Against the canon laws of our foundation.—  
I must not suffer this: yet 'tis but the lees  
And settling of a melancholy blood.  
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this  
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight  
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.—

*The BROTHERS rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground; his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The ATTENDANT SPIRIT comes in.*

*Spirit.* What, have you let the false enchanter scape?  
O, ye mistook! ye should have snatch'd his wand,  
And bound him fast. Without his rod revers'd  
And backward mutters of dissevering power,  
We cannot free the lady that sits here  
In stony fetters fix't and motionless.

— Yet stay, be not disturb'd : now I bethink me,  
Some other means I have which may be us'd,  
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,  
The soothest shepherd that e'er pip'd on plains.—

There is a gentle Nymph not far from hence, —  
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream : 825  
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure ;  
Whilome she was the daughter of Locrine, —  
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.  
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit  
Of her enraged stepdame, Guendolen, 830  
Commended her fair innocence to the flood  
That stay'd her flight with his cross-flowing course.—  
The water-nymphs that in the bottom play'd  
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,  
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall ; 835

Who, piteous of her woes, rear'd her lank head, —  
 And gave her to his daughters to imbathe  
 In nectar'd lavers strew'd with aspodel, —  
 And through the porch and inlet of each sense —  
 Dropp'd in ambrosial oils, till she reviv'd,      840  
 And underwent a quick immortal change,  
 Made Goddess of the river. Still she retains  
 Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve  
 Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,  
 Helping all urchin blasts and ill-luck signs —  
 That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,      845  
 Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals ;  
 For which the shepherds at their festivals  
 Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,  
 And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream —  
 Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.      850  
 And, as the old swain said, she can unlock —  
 The clasping charm and thaw the numbing spell,  
 If she be right invok'd in warbled song ;  
 For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift      855  
 To aid a virgin, such as was herself,  
 In hard-besetting need. This will I try,  
 And add the power of some adjuring verse.

## SONG.

*Sabrina fair,*  
*Listen where thou art sitting*      860  
*Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,*  
*In twisted braids of lilies knitting*  
*The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair ; —*  
*Listen for dear honour's sake.*  
*Goddess of the silver lake,*  
*Listen and save ! —*

Listen and appear to us  
 In the name of great Oceanus ; —

By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,  
 And Tethys' grave majestic pace ; 870  
 By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,  
 And the Carpathian wizard's hook ; —  
 By scaly Triton's winding shell, —  
 And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell ; —  
 By Leucothea's lovely hands, —  
 And her son that rules the strands ; — 875  
 By Thetis' tinsel-slipper'd feet, —  
 And the songs of Sirens sweet ;  
 By dead Parthenope's dear tomb, —  
 And fair Ligea's golden comb,  
 Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks 880  
 Sleeking her soft alluring locks ;  
 By all the nymphs that nightly dance  
 Upon thy streams with wily glance,  
 Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head —  
 From thy coral-paven bed, 885  
 And bridle in thy headlong wave,  
 Till thou our summons answer'd have.

Listen and save !

SABRINA rises, attended by Water-nymphs, and sings.

By the rushy-fringed bank, — 890  
 Where grow the willow and the osier dank,  
 My sliding chariot stays, —  
 Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen —  
 Of turkis blue, and emerald green, —  
 That in the channel strays ; 895  
 Whilst from off the waters fleet  
 Thus I set my printless feet —  
 O'er the cowslip's velvet head,  
 That bends not as I tread.  
 Gentle swain, at thy request 900  
 I am here !

*Spirit.* Goddess dear,  
We implore thy powerful hand  
To undo the charmed band  
Of true virgin here distrest,  
Through the force and through the wile  
Of unblest enchanter vile.

905

*Sabrina.* Shepherd, 'tis my office best  
To help ensnared chastity.

910

Brightest lady, look on me.  
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast  
Drops that from my fountain pure  
I have kept of precious cure;  
(Thrice upon thy finger's tip,  
Thrice upon thy rubied lip)  
Next this marble venom'd seat,  
Smear'd with gums of glutinous heat,  
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.  
Now the spell hath lost his hold;  
And I must haste ere morning hour  
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

915

920

SABRINA descends, and the LADY rises out of her seat.

*Spirit.* Virgin, daughter of Locrine,  
Sprung of old Anchises' line,  
May thy brimmed waves for this  
Their full tribute never miss  
From a thousand petty rills  
That tumble down the snowy hills;  
Summer drouth or singed air  
Never scorch thy tresses fair,  
Nor wet October's torrent flood  
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;  
May thy billows roll ashore  
The beryl and the golden ore;  
May thy lofty head be crown'd.

925

930

With many a tower and terrace round,  
And here and there thy banks upon  
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

935

Come, lady, while Heaven lends us grace,  
Let us fly this cursèd place,  
Lest the sorcerer us entice  
With some other new device.

940

Not a waste or needless sound  
Till we come to holier ground.  
I shall be your faithful guide  
Through this gloomy covert wide ;  
And not many furlongs thence  
Is your father's residence,  
Where this night are met in state  
Many a friend to gratulate  
His wish'd presence, and beside  
All the swains that there abide  
With jigs and rural dance resort.  
We shall catch them at their sport,  
And our sudden coming there  
Will double all their mirth and cheer.

945

950

955

Come, let us haste ; the stars grow high,  
But Night sits monarch yet in the mid-sky.

*The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the President's castle ; then come in Country Dancers, after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, with the two BROTHERS and the LADY.*

## SONG.

SPIRIT. *Back, shepherds, back ! enough your play —*  
*Till next sunshine holiday.*  
*Here be, without duck or nod, —*  
*Other trippings to be trod*  
*Of lighter toes, and such court guise —*  
*As Mercury did first devise —*

960

*With the mincing Dryades —  
On the lawns and on the leas.*

965

*This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.*

*Noble lord and lady bright, —  
I have brought ye new delight.  
Here behold so goodly grown  
Three fair branches of your own.  
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,  
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,  
And sent them here through hard assays —  
With a crown of deathless praise,  
To triumph in victorious dance —  
O'er sensual folly and intemperance.*

970

975

*The dances ended, the SPIRIT epiloguizes.*

*Spirit. To the ocean now I fly,  
And those happy climes that lie  
Where Day never shuts his eye,  
Up in the broad fields of the sky.  
There I suck the liquid air  
All amidst the gardens fair  
Of Hesperus and his daughters three  
That sing about the golden tree.)  
Along the crispèd shades and bowers —  
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring ; —  
The Graces and the rosy-bosom'd Hours —  
Thither all their bounties bring.  
There eternal summer dwells,  
And west winds with musky wing —  
About the cedar alleys fling —  
Nard and cassia's balmy smells. —  
Iris there with humid bow  
Waters the odorous banks, that blow —*

980

985

990

Flowers of more mingled hue  
 Than her purfled scarf can shew,  
 And drenches with Elysian dew —  
 List, mortals, if your ears be true! —  
 Beds of hyacinth and roses,  
 Where young Adonis oft reposes,  
 Waxing well of his deep wound  
 In slumber soft, and on the ground  
 Sadly sits the Assyrian queen. —  
 But far above in spangled sheen —  
 Celestial Cupid, her fam'd son, advanc'd  
 Holds his dear Psyche, sweet entranc'd  
 After her wandering labours long,  
 Till free consent the gods among  
 Make her his eternal bride,  
 And from her fair unspotted side  
 Two blissful twins are to be born,  
 Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.)

995

1000

1005

1010

But now my task is smoothly done,  
 I can fly, or I can run  
 Quickly to the green earth's end,  
 Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend, —  
 And from thence can soar as soon  
 To the corners of the moon. —  
 Mortals, that would follow me,  
 Love Virtue; she alone is free.  
 She can teach ye how to climb  
 Higher than the sphery chime; —  
 Or, if Virtue feeble were,  
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.)

1015

1020

## LYCIDAS.

### INTRODUCTION.

THIS poem was composed in 1637, and published at Cambridge in 1638. It is a memorial poem in the allegorical style of a pastoral, and was composed under the following circumstances.

Edward King, whose death the poem commemorates, was lost by shipwreck Aug. 10, 1637. King was a fellow-student of Milton at Cambridge, but somewhat his junior. It would appear that Milton was acquainted with King, but how close a friendship existed between them we can only gather from the poem. King had been popular at Cambridge, and his loss was deeply felt. Accordingly it was proposed to publish a collection of poems in honor of the young man, as an expression of regret at his untimely death. *Lycidas* was Milton's contribution to the collection. It was published with the simple title of *Lycidas*, and signed J. M.; but when Milton published his poems in 1645, he added the subtitle, "In this monody," etc.

In *Lycidas* Milton, as has been said above, adopted the pastoral style. This form of poetry was common in Milton's day. Originating with the Greek poet Theocritus, and adopted by Virgil, pastoral poetry had for centuries sunk into obscurity; but during the period known as the *Renaissance* it had revived, and had been much cultivated in Italy. Later it found many imitators in France, Spain, and England. Spenser adopted it in his *Shepherd's Calender*. Milton, who was a great student of both Spenser and the Italian poets, was familiar with the pastoral, and adopted this style as suitable to express his feelings for the death of King.

Rev. Mark Pattison, whose admiration for Milton blinds him to any defects in Milton's poetry, says: "This piece, unmatched in the whole range of English poetry, and never again to be equalled by Milton himself, leaves all criticism behind. Indeed,

so high is the poetic note here reached, that the common ear fails to catch it. *Lycidas* is the one touchstone of taste; the eighteenth century criticism could not make anything of it. . . . For, while the equable and temperate emotion of *L'Allegro* allowed of direct expression in the poet's own person, the burning heat of passion in *Lycidas* has to be transferred into the artificial framework of the conventional pastoral to make it approachable." Yet Dr. Johnson and other critics have observed that the poem does not express true grief. Real grief, say these critics, does not express itself in such an artificial style of poetry. The elegy certainly does not bespeak any tender relation between Milton and King. It seems to express nothing more than the regret which would naturally be excited by such a catastrophe. Again, Milton's lines on the corruption of the Established Church seem to be an unwarrantable digression from the subject, jarring upon a sensitive mind, and detracting from the thought. We seem to see a touch of the harshness which characterized many of Milton's later prose works.

For all that, the poem is an exquisite work, full of interest in that it portrays the corrupt state of the church, and the frivolous times on which poetry had fallen. It marks the transition from the Milton of the earlier poems to the author of *Paradise Lost*.

A word ought to be said upon the versification. Milton shows wonderful skill in the use of lines of irregular length, so grouped that the rhythm seems to echo the feelings of the speaker. Dr. Johnson has pointed out that Milton borrowed this device from the Italian poets. Masson says, "The art of the verse is a study in itself. The lines are mostly the common iambics of five feet, but every now and then there is an exquisitely managed variation of a short line of three iambi. Then the interlinking and intertwining of the rhymes, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in threes, or even in fives, and at all varieties of intervals, from that of the contiguous couplet to that of an unobserved chime or stanza of some length, are positive perfection. Occasionally, too, there is a line that does not rhyme; and in every such case, though the rhyme is not missed by the reader's ear, in so much music is the line embedded, yet a delicate artistic reason may be detected or fancied for its formal absence."

## LYCIDAS.

[*In this Monody the author bewails a learned friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish seas, 1637; and by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height.]*

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more,  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
And with forc'd fingers rude

Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.

5

Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear

Compels me to disturb your season due;

For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,

Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.

Who would not sing for Lycidas ? He knew

10

Himself to sing and build the lofty rhyme.

He must not float upon his watery bier

Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,

Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well

15

That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring ;

Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.

Hence with denial vain and coy excuse ;

So may some gentle Muse

With lucky words favour my destin'd urn, .

20

And as he passes turn,

And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud !

For we were nurs'd upon the selfsame hill,

Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill ;

25

Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd  
 Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,  
 We drove a-field, and both together heard  
 What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,  
 Battering our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
 Oft till the star that rose at evening bright      30  
 Toward heaven's descent had slop'd his westerling wheel.)

Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
 Temper'd to the oaten flute;  
 Rough Satyrs danc'd, and Fauns with cloven heel  
 From the glad sound would not be absent long,      35  
 And old Dametas lov'd to hear our song.

But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,  
 Now thou art gone and never must return !  
 Thee, shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,  
 With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,      40  
 And all their echoes mourn.  
 The willows and the hazel copses green  
 Shall now no more be seen  
 Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.

As killing as the canker to the rose,      45  
 Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,  
 Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear,  
 When first the white-thorn blows,  
 Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear. )

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep      50  
 Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas ?

For neither were ye playing on the steep  
 Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,  
 Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,  
 Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.      55  
 Ay me, I fondly dream !

Had ye been there — for what could that have done ?  
 What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,  
 The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,

Whom universal nature did lament,  
When by the rout that made the hideous roar  
His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore ?

{ Alas ! what boots it with incessant care  
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse ?  
Were it not better done, as others use,  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair ?

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise — 70  
That last infirmity of noble mind —

To scorn delights and live laborious days ;  
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears, 75  
And slits the thin-spun life. " But not the praise,"  
Phœbus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears ;  
" Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistering foil

Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove ;  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed. 80

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,  
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal reeds,  
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.

But now my oat proceeds,  
And listens to the herald of the sea  
That came in Neptune's plea. 85

He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,  
What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain ?  
And question'd every gust of rugged wings  
That blows from off each beaked promontory.

They knew not of his story ; 95  
 And sage Hippotades their answer brings,  
 That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd :  
 The air was calm, and on the level brine  
 Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd.  
 It was that fatal and perfidious bark, 100  
 Built in the eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,  
 That sunk so low that sacred head of thine. )  
 'Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,  
 His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,  
 Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge 105  
 Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.  
 "Ah ! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge ?"  
 Last came, and last did go,  
 The pilot of the Galilean lake ;  
 Two massy keys he bore of metals twain — 110  
 The golden opes, the iron shuts amain.  
 He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake :  
 "How well could I have spar'd for thee, young swain,  
 Enoe of such as for their bellies' sake  
 Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold ! ) 115  
 Of other care they little reckoning make  
 Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,  
 And shove away the worthy bidden guest.  
 Blind mouths ! that scarce themselves know how to hold  
 A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least 120  
 That to the faithful herdman's art belongs !  
 What recks it them ? What need they ? They are sped ;  
 And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
 Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw.  
 The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed, 125  
 But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,  
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread ;  
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
 Daily devours apace, and nothing said.

But that two-handed engine at the door  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

130

Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past  
That shrunk thy streams ; return, Sicilian Muse,  
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast  
(Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues

135

Ye valleys low, where the wild whispers use  
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparingly looks,  
Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,  
That on the green turf suck the honey'd showers,  
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
The tufted crow-toe and pale jessamine,  
The white pink and the pansy freak'd with jet,  
The glowing violet,

140

The musk-rose and the well-attir'd woodbine,  
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head  
And every flower that sad embroidery wears :  
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,  
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.)  
(For so, to interpose a little ease,

145

Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise,  
Ay me ! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas  
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd :

150

Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;  
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,  
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,  
Where the great vision of the guarded mount  
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold :  
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth,  
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth !

155

160

Weep no more, woful shepherds, weep no more,      165  
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,  
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.  
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,  
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore      170  
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :  
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
Through the dear might of him that walk'd the waves,  
Where, other groves and other streams along,  
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,      175  
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song  
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.  
There entertain him all the saints above,  
In solemn troops and sweet societies,  
That sing, and singing in their glory move,      180  
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.  
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more ;  
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,  
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good  
To all that wander in that perilous flood.      185

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,  
While the still Morn went out with sandals gray.  
He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,  
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay ;  
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,      190  
And now was dropt into the western bay.  
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue :  
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.

## NOTES.

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### HYMN ON THE NATIVITY.

#### LINES.

2. **Wherein** = whereon. The early poets often used *in* for *on*.
4. **Redemption** = ransom; *i.e.*, the ransom or deliverance of sinners from the bondage of sin and the penalties of God's violated law.
5. **The holy sages**; *i.e.*, the prophets.
6. **Our deadly forfeit should release**; *i.e.*, should release us from the penalty of death under which sin had brought us.
- 8-9. Milton's poetry often contains a repetition.
8. **Unsufferable**. Old usage preferred the English prefix to the Latin *in*.
11. **The midst** = in the midst. **Trinal Unity**. Reference is here made to the doctrine of the Trinity as expressed in the Athanasian Creed.
13. **Courts**. A favorite word with Milton in this connection. Cf. *Psalms*, xcvi, 8, and c. 4.
14. **A darksome house**, etc. Cf. *Il P.*, 91. **Darksome**. *Some* is a favorite adjectival termination in older English.
15. **Heavenly Muse**. The muse of Hebrew poetry. Cf. *Par. Lost*, I, 6-8.
16. **Afford** = give without reference to the means of the giver.
19. **The Sun's team**. Refers to the mythological idea of the Sun drawn through the heavens in a chariot.
20. **Print** = foot-print.
21. **Spangled host**; *i.e.*, the stars bright as spangles.
23. **Star-led**. See *Matthew*, ii, 2. **Wizards** = wise men, the original sense of the word. So used by Spenser, *F. Q.*, I, iv, 12, and IV, xii,
2. **Odors sweet**. See *Matthew*, ii, 11.
24. **Prevent**; *i.e.*, *anticipate*, the etymological meaning.
27. **Angel quire**. See *Luke*, ii, 13, 14.
28. *Isaiah*, vi, 6.
31. *Luke*, ii, 12.
33. **Doff** = do-off; *i.e.*, take off. **Gaudy** = holiday. **Gaudy** usually has an uncomplimentary significance.
36. **Wanton** = to revel without restraint. A favorite word of Milton, implying non-restraint. Cf. *L'All.*, 27 and 141.

37. **Fair** = flattering.
38. **Woos** = entreats. Not so strong a word as at present. Cf. *Il P.*, 64.
41. **Pollute**. The Latin participle *pollutus* with its termination anglicized. In the English of Milton's time these participial forms are common. Meaning? **Blame** = sin, not reproof.
45. **Cease**, causal = cause to cease. Cf. Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, V, v, 255. *Timon of Athens*, II, i, 16. Milton may have had in mind in this stanza some masque in which he had witnessed the descent of Peace.
47. **Olive green**. The olive was the sign of peace. Ben Jonson gives the following allegorical description of Peace (see *Entertainments at the Coronation of James I*): "The first and principal person in the Temple was Irene, or Peace. She was placed aloft, . . . her attire white, . . . a wreath of olive on her head, on her shoulders a silver dove. In her left hand she held forth an olive branch."
48. **The turning sphere**; *i.e.*, the celestial spheres. The Ptolemaic system.
49. **Harbinger** = forerunner. See *Dict.*
50. **With turtle wing**; *i.e.*, the wing of a turtle dove, the emblem of peace.
51. **Myrtle wand**. The symbol of peace.
- 53-54. The whole Roman Empire was at peace at this time.
56. **Hooked chariot**. The ancient war chariots were armed with scythes and hooks. Cf. Spenser, *F. Q.*, V, viii, 28: —
- "A chariot high,  
With yron wheels and hookes arm'd dreadfully."
59. **Awful**. Compare with the present use of this word.
60. **Sovran**. Milton's form for sovereign, and the more correct. See the etymology of the word.
64. **Whist** = hushed, from the verb *whist* or *hist*. Cf. *Il P.*, 55. The verb is derived from an interjection, *hist*, used to enforce silence.
66. **Ocean**, trisyllabic. Cf. *Mer. of Venice*, I, i: —
- "Your mind is tossing on the ocean."
68. **Birds of calm** = halcyons, or kingfishers. The tradition was, that for seven days before and after the shortest day of the year, while these birds were breeding, the sea was calm.
71. **Bending one way**; *i.e.*, to the birthplace of the Christ-child. **Influence**. An astrological term, referring to the power exerted by the heavenly bodies on men's lives, fortunes, etc. May mean here simply *rays*.
73. **For** = in spite of.
74. **Lucifer**. The morning star.
75. **Orbs** = orbits. **Glimmering** = gleaming.
76. **Bespake**. The prefix *be* gives a slightly intensive force. **Bid** = bade. The weak past tense is here preferred. Cf. *Par. Lost*, II, 514.

78. **Room.** Meaning ?

82. **New-enlightened.** Milton uses a number of similar compounds.  
 Cf. *Lyc.*, 170; *Comus*, 36, 228.

84. **Burning axletree;** i.e., of the sun's chariot. Cf. "glowing axle," *Comus*, 96. Tree in old English = wood or beam.

85. **Lawn.** Meaning ? Cf. *L'All.*, 71; *Gray's Elegy*, 100. Milton takes the Scripture narrative, and treats it in the pastoral style.

86. **Or ere** = before ever. Cf. *Hamlet*, I, ii, 147: —

"Or ere these shoes were old."

88. **Than** = then; an old form used for the sake of rhyme.

89. **Pan.** See *Class. Dist.* The patron god of the shepherds: equivalent here to God; i.e., Christ. Pan is frequently used in pastoral poetry for Christ. Cf. Spenser's *Shep. Cal.*, — *May*: —

"When great Pan account of shepherdes shall aske."

92. **Was.** Why not *were*? **Silly** = simple.

93-95. See *Luke*, ii, 12.

95. **Strook** = struck. Here apparently used for rhyme; but Milton seems to have preferred the form *strook* for musical reasons, even in his prose. (Masson.)

97. **Noise** = music; i.e., the music of stringed instruments.

98. **Took** = Latin *rapio*, carried away; i.e., captivated.

100. **Close** = cadence; i.e., at the end of a piece of music. Cf. *Comus*, 548; also Shakespeare, *Richard II*, II, i, 12, and *Henry V*, I, ii, 182, 183.

102. **Round** may mean *sphere*, and refer to the moon, or to the concave of the moon's orbit. **Of Cynthia's Seat**; i.e., the moon. Diana, goddess of the moon, was called Cynthia from Mt. Cynthus in the island of Delos, where she was born.

104. **Won** = persuaded.

106. **Its.** This word occurs in only two other instances in Milton's verse. (Rolle.) *Par. Lost*, I, 254; IV, 813. It came into use slowly at the end of the sixteenth century. Spenser does not use it at all. Shakespeare uses it occasionally in his later plays (nine times).

108. **In happier union**; i.e., than that of nature.

107-108. Cf. Dryden's *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, 1, 2.

110. **Globe** = mass.

111. **Beams**; i.e., beams of light. **Array'd** = clothed.

112-113. **Cherubim, Seraphim.** Used here for angelic beings, and often so conceived by Milton. Cf. *Il P.*, 54. They are not so treated in Scripture.

116. **Unexpressive** = *inexpressible*. See *Lyc.*, 176. Cf. Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, III, ii, 10.

"The fair, the chaste, the unexpressive she."

119. Milton gets his idea from *Job*, xxxviii, 7. The expression "Sons of Morning" from *Isaiah*, xiv, 12.

120-121. **Great** — **set.** A bad rhyme.

120-124. When God created the universe.

123. **Cast** = laid.

124. **Weltering** = tossing. Cf. *Lyc.*, 13. **Oozy** = slimy.

125. An allusion to the music of the spheres made by the revolution of the celestial spheres according to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. In Milton's day the Copernican system was not accepted. Milton, for poetic purposes, at least, adopted the Ptolemaic system. For a description of Ptolemy's system see any good encyclopædia. Milton's idea here is, that if ever the music of the spheres be heard, the poet would have them heard now.

128. **Silver.** A common epithet of music among the old poets.

**Chime**; i.e., harmony of sound.

131. **Ninefold harmony**; i.e., the harmony of the nine spheres. Cf. *Arc.*, 64.

135. **The age of gold.** Spoken of by Ovid; i.e., the fabled age of Saturnus.

136. **Speckled Vanity.** *Speckled* may mean gaudy, or perhaps, better, plague-spotted, a figure in keeping with *leprous sin* below.

138. **Mould.** Often used for the earth in old romances; here seems to mean *materiel*.

140. **Leave** = disclose. **Peering** = breaking. The verb *peer* is often used by Shakespeare of the day breaking. Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, I, i, 126:—

“Before the worshipped moon peer'd forth.”

141. There is an allusion here to Astraea, who, according to an ancient myth, was to return to earth when the Golden Age came again.

143. **Orb'd** = encircled. The 1645 edition of Milton has the following reading for lines 143-144:—

“The enameled arras of the rainbow wearing,  
And Mercy set between.”

146. **Tissued** = interwoven. **Steering** = holding their course.

152. **Bitter cross.** Cf. Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, i, 1, 27:—

“For our advantage on the bitter cross.”

153. **Must** = is destined to. **Redeem.** Meaning?

155. **Ychain'd.** Y is the old past participle prefix, the same as the Anglo Saxon prefix ge. Cf. *L'All.*, 12, *yceupt*. The prefix y is very common in Chaucer, Spenser, and the poets of that period. **Sleep** = sleep of death.

156. **Trump** = trumpet; i.e., at the Resurrection.

157-159. See *Exodus*, xix, 16-20.

163. **Session** = judgment. The word is here a trisyllable.

164. **The dreadful Judge.** See *1 Thessalonians*, iv, 17.

165-167. “Then our happiness shall be complete, but now it has only begun.”

168. **The old Dragon**; i.e., Satan. See *Revelation*, xii, 9.

170. **Casts.** Metaphor from the casting of a net.

172. **Swinges** = lashes. **Horror** of his tail = his horrid tail. Cf. *Lyc.*, 160. "Fable of Bellerus" = fabled Bellerus.

173. There was a general belief that oracles ceased at the birth of Christ; but such was not the case. See note on lines 176-177 below. Milton, in stanzas xix to xxi, wishes to show how the coming of Christ destroyed the pagan divinities of Greece and Rome, and in stanzas xxii to xxv, the destruction of those of the East.

175. **Deceiving**. It was a belief in the Middle Ages that all oracles were works of the Devil.

176-177. These lines refer to the Delphic Oracle, whose responses did not, in reality, cease until about 400 A.D.

178. **Hollow** = ghost-like. **Delphos**. Not an uncommon form for Delphi. Delphi lay at the foot of Mt. Parnassus; hence the word *steep*.

180. **Cell**. "The cella was the most important part of a temple, where the statue of the deity was placed. Thence oracles were given. It was only accessible to the priests, and to the initiated." (Browne.)

181-183. Perhaps Milton had in mind *Matthew*, ii, 8, or *Isaiah*, lxv, 19.

185. **Poplar pale**. The white poplar. Cf. Horace's "pinus ingens albaque populus."

186. **Genius**. See *Il P.*, 154 and *Arc.*, 44, *et seq.* **Sent** = dismissed.

188. **Twilight shade**. Cf. *Il P.*, 133, "twilight groves."

189. The words *in consecrated earth* have reference to the Lemures, and *on the holy hearth* to the Lars. (Hales.)

191. The *Lares* were ancestral spirits worshipped by the Romans as household gods. The *Lemures* were ghosts in general, which were worshipped as household gods.

194. **Flamens** = priests in general.

195. **And the chill marble**, etc. A fact not unfrequently noted by ancient writers. Vergil's *Geog.*, I, 480.

197. **Peor**; i.e., Baäl — Peor. God of the Sun, the chief male deity of the Phœnician and Canaanitish nations. **Baälim**. Plural of Baäl; used for Phœnician deities in general.

199. **That twice-batter'd god**, etc.; i.e., Dagon. *Par. Lost*, I, 457. See 1 *Samuel*, v, 3 and 4.

200. **Mooned Ashtaroth**. The chief female deity of the Phœnicians. Identical with Astarte, the Syrian Aphrodite. **Mooned**. Astarte was symbolized either by the planet Venus or by the Moon. In the latter case she was represented in works of art as "horned like the crescent moon;" hence the epithet "mooned."

201. Milton has assigned to Ashtaroth the titles "mater deum," belonging to Cybele, and "regina coeli," belonging to Juno.

203. **Hammon**, or *Ammon*, an Egyptian god. He was protector of flocks, and represented with the horns of a ram.

204. **Thammuz** = Tammuz, identical with Adonis, killed by a wild boar, and yearly mourned by the women. See *Class. Dict.*

205. **Moloch**. See 1 *Kings*, xi, 7. A deity of the Ammonites, worshipped at Rabbah, their chief city. According to Jewish tradition, they

sacrificed their children to Moloch, an idol of brass, having the head of a calf, the rest of a kingly figure, with arms extended to receive the sacrifice. "Moloch is here represented as flying from his worshippers in the very midst of one of the services in his honor." (Hales.)

209. **Grisly or grizzly** = horrible.

211. **Brutish.** Refers rather to the form than to the nature of the gods. The religion of the Egyptians was a rude Fetichism, that mainly took for its symbols living animals.

212. **Isis, Orus.** Isis, an Egyptian deity, goddess of the Earth, having the form of a woman, but with horns like a cow. Wife of Osiris, mother of Orus or Horus. Horus was the Egyptian Sun-god. **The dog Anubis**, an Egyptian deity with a dog's head. By some said to be the son of Osiris.

213. ~~Osiris~~. Osiris was the Nile-god. Apis was the bull-god, or Sacred Bull. Milton here seems to confound Osiris with Apis.

214. **Memphian grove.** Apis, the Sacred Bull, was kept with the greatest care at Memphis.

215. **Unshower'd** = dry from want of rain.

217. **His sacred chest.** Osiris was put into a chest, and thrown into the Nile. According to Hales it means *his worshipp'd ark*; see l. 220.

218. **Shroud.** Here used in the sense of shelter.

221. See *Matthew*, ii, 6.

223. **Eyne.** Old form of the plural of eye; used for rhyme.

226. **Typhon.** A hundred-headed monster, and one of the giants who tried to overthrow Zeus. See *Class. Dict.* Afterwards connected with Egyptian theology. Milton perhaps followed this view. **Not** = not even. **Snaky twine.** In Egyptian mythology Typhon was often represented in the form of a crocodile.

229. **The sun in bed.** This figure suggests sunset, but sunrise is meant. The metaphor is somewhat fantastic and far-fetched, such as the metaphysical school delighted in.

231. **Orient.** Meaning?

232. **The flocking shadows;** i.e., the troops of ghosts.

233. **The infernal jail;** i.e., the grave.

235. **Fays** = elves.

236. **Night-steeds;** i.e., the steeds that draw the chariot of night.  
**Maze.** An intricate dance. Cf. Shakespeare's *Mid. N. Dr.*, II, i, 99:—

"Quaint mazes in the wanton green."

240. **Youngest-teemed** = latest born (Star of Bethlehem).

241. **Hath fixed;** i.e., hath brought to rest.

244. **Bright-harness'd** = in bright armor. Harness is now used of the gear of horses, but formerly meant men's armor.

## L'ALLEGRO.

### LINES.

- 1-24. What relation do these lines bear to the rest of the poem ?
2. **Cerberus.** The three-headed dog which guarded the entrance to Hades. See *Class. Dict.* The parentage of Melancholy is Milton's own idea. Milton frequently mythologizes on his own account. Cerberus may here be taken for the symbol of hideousness.
3. **Stygian.** From *Styx*. See *Class. Dict.* Euripides used the word for *detested*. Does Milton so use it here ? Cf. *Par. Lost*, I, 239; II, 577. **Forlorn.** Meaning ? Cf. *Par. Lost*, X, 921.
4. What is noticeable in this line ?
5. **Uncouth.** From Anglo-Saxon *cunnan*, to know, prefix un. Cf. *Lyc.*, 185, "uncouth swain;" *Par. Lost*, V, 98, "a voyage uncouth." Meaning of the word here ?
6. **Brooding.** Cf. Vergil's words, "Ponto nox incubat atra." **Jealous.** Why jealous ?
7. **The night raven**, the heron, considered a bird of ill-omen. Cf. Shakespeare's *Much Ado*, II, iii, 84.
9. **Ragged.** Same word as *rugged*. Milton does not use this form elsewhere.
10. **Cimmerian.** The Cimmerii were a mythical people who dwelt in northern and western Europe, later known as the Celts. According to Homer and the early Grecian poets, they lived in a land of perpetual darkness.
11. **Fair and free.** A familiar epithet applied to women in the old ballads. Chaucer often uses it. **Free** = frank, artless.
12. **Yelected.** From the old English verb *clepan*, to call. The word is obsolete, and is used by Milton only here. Cf. *Hymn on the Nat.*, 155. **Euphrosyne** (Mirth). One of the three Graces of classic poetry. Aglaia (Splendor) and Thalia (Pleasure) were the other two. See *Class. Dict.*
13. **Heart-easing.** Compare Homer's epithets.
14. This parentage of the Graces Milton borrows from Servius in a comment on the *Aeneid*. Some writers make them the daughters of Zeus, others of Apollo. See Spenser's *F. Q.*, VI, x. 22. .
17. **Some sager sing.** Although Milton ascribes this parentage to others, it is probably his own invention. **Sager.** Some editors take this word to be an old adverb meaning *wisely*.
18. **Frolic.** An adjective now nearly obsolete. Shakespeare uses it in *Mid. N. Dr.* Tennyson also uses it.

19. **Zephyr, Aurora.** See *Class. Dict.*  
 20. **A-Maying.** "A" is a corruption of "on." Cf. Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, II, i, 174. Cf. also the modern expression, going a-fishing.

24. **Buxom** (also spelled *bucksome*). Original meaning *flexible*. Chaucer and Spenser use it in the sense of yielding. **Debonair** (French *de bonne air*). "Courteous" or gentle. It is a favorite epithet of the old poets.

25. In line 11, Mirth is a goddess. Notice the comparison here to a nymph. Notice also the companions of Mirth, and the fine distinctions Milton makes. See *Dict.*

27. **Quips and cranks.** *Quips*, sharp, witty sayings. *Cranks*, any twisted saying, a sort of pun.

28. **Nods and becks and wreathed smiles.** Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, has:—

"With becks and nods he first began  
 To try the wench's mind ;  
 With becks, and nods, and smiles again  
 No answer did he find."

Perhaps Milton imbibed his idea from the above source.

29. **Hebe.** Goddess of youth and cup-bearer of the gods. See *Class. Dict.*

31. **Wrinkled Care.** Contrast with "wreathed smiles" above.  
 33. Compare Shakespeare's *Tempest*, IV, i, 45, "Each one tripping on his toe;" *Comus*, 144.

33-34. Contrast *Il P.*, 38. Notice the quick, jerky rhythm of lines 25-34, and the relief of the following slower lines.

36. Why does Milton speak of Liberty as a mountain nymph ?  
 38. **Crew.** Same word as crowd. Used in Milton's time for any gathering, in no sense derogatory. Compare its use with that of to-day.

40. **Unreproved.** A word frequently used by Milton in the sense of *blameless*. Cf. *Par. Lost*, III, 3; Spenser's *F. Q.*, II, vii, 16.

41. **To hear.** Parse. The following lines present a beautiful picture of a summer dawn, and remind one of Shakespeare's description, *Rom. and Jul.*, iii. 5.

44. **Dappled.** Patched in color, variegated. Cf. our expression *dapple gray*. Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, has:—

"Dapples the drowsy east with spots of gray."

45. **To come.** Probably depends on *to hear*. It means, perhaps, that the lark seems to Milton to bid a cheerful good-morning in his song. It is the impression the song makes on the poet's mind rather than the fact itself.

47. **The sweet-brier, etc.** Keightley observes that the sweet-brier and eglantine are the same. By the *twisted eglantine* Milton possibly means the honeysuckle. Spenser is frequently careless in such matters.

51. Notice the metre of this line.

53. Upon what does *listening* depend? Explain the transition from the preceding line. Cf. *Gray's Elegy*, 20-21.

56. **Not unseen.** Cf. *Il P.*, l. 65. Some editors have thought that this expression shows that Milton wrote *Il Penseroso* first.

62. **Liveries.** French *livrée*, formerly meant any allowance made to servants; later, clothes given out. Here has a more modern sense, like *costumes*.

63. **Dight.** Obsolete; means *decked*. Cf. *Il P.*, 159.

66. **Scythe.** Milton spells it *sithe*; which is the more sensible?

67. **Tells his tale.** Commentators seem to agree that this expression means "counts his flock." Cf. *Exodus*, v, 8, and *Psalms*, xc, 9, "We spend our years as a tale that is told." It is hardly probable that the shepherds were telling stories so early in the day, although Keightley thinks this interpretation "may be defended."

69. From line 69 the poet has a new vision, which is mental rather than bodily, and is more general.

70. **Landscape.** Some of the earlier editions have *lantskip*, later editions, *landskip*. Anglo Saxon *landshipe* or *landshape*.

71. **Russet** = reddish-brown. **Lawns** = fields. Cf. *Hymn on the Nat.*

85. "Lawn means an open space between woods." (Browne.) **Fallows gray.** *Fallows* is used of fields overgrown with grass consequent on being long unploughed. *Gray* refers to the stubbles.

73. **Mountains.** A mental picture. There were no mountains in the vicinity of Horton.

74. **Labouring** = heavy with rain.

75. **Pied.** From the French *pie*, seen in English *magpie*. See *Dict.* The word was much used in relation to flowers by the early poets. Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, V, ii, 904:—

"Where daisies pied and violets blue."

76. Milton may have had in mind the Thames, and its tributary, the Coln.

77. **Towers and battlements.** While all this is a mental picture, Milton may have had in mind Windsor Castle, which is visible at Horton.

79. **Lies** = *dwells*; frequently used in this sense by old writers.

80. **Cynosure.** From the Greek, meaning literally dog's tail. The term was applied to the constellation *Ursa Minor*, then called the Lesser Dog, and applied especially to the end star of the tail, which is the *Pole-star*. See *Dict.*

81. Milton's fancy now turns to English rural sights and sounds. He borrows the names of his shepherds from the *Ecllogues* of Vergil, who in turn borrowed them from the Greek pastorals.

85. **Herbs.** Here means, probably, vegetables.

89. **Or, if the earlier season lead.** What season is this?

91. **Secure.** Latin *securus*, free from care. The early authors often used the word in this sense. Milton's fancy here takes its flight to the little country hamlets back among the hills.

94. **Rebeck.** A variety of violin, originally with two strings, later with three. Shakespeare has ingeniously given the name of Hugh Rebeck to one of the three musicians in *Rom. and Jul.*, iv. 5.

96. **Chequer'd.** Meaning? Cf. Shakespeare, *Titus Andron.*, II, iii, 15.

98. **On a sunshine holiday.** Cf. *Comus*, 959. Shakespeare, in *Richard II*, IV, i, 221, speaks of "sunshine days."

100. **Spicy, nut-brown ale.** What we should call to-day a kind of punch. It consisted of ale, sweetened and spiced, with toast and crab-apples in it. Shakespeare calls it the "*gossip's bowl.*"

102. Here follow a number of stories told by different persons present, *she* (103), *he* (104). **Fairy Mab.** Queen of the fairies, who lingered around houses, playing pranks on housewives and maids. She was especially fond of curds and cream. See Mercutio's description in *Rom. and Jul.*, I, iv, 54. See also Keightley's *Fairy Mythology*. **Junkets.** Cream-cheese; so called because packed in rushes. Later came to mean sweetmeats. See *Dict.*

103. **Pinch'd and pull'd.** Punishments inflicted by the fairies on tell-tales and untidy housewives. Ben Jonson, in his *Satyr*, speaks of Mab as follows:—

"She that pinches country wenches  
If they rub not clean their benches."

104-105. Milton combines two stories: 1. the story of Jack-o'-the-Lanthorn misleading a man; 2. the story of Robin Goodfellow, the servant goblin.

104. **Friar's lantern.** Milton seems to have confounded Friar Rush, who haunted houses, with Jack-o'-the-Lanthorn, or Will-o'-the-Wisp. Scott follows Milton.

105. **Drudging goblin.** A domestic spirit called Robin Goodfellow; identical with the Puck of Shakespeare. He often rendered assistance to men, especially if given a bowl of cream. Ben Jonson (*Lover Restored*) says of him, "I am the honest, plain, country spirit and harmless Robin Goodfellow."

106. **Set.** Meaning?

110. **Fiend.** Originally meant any spirit. How used to-day?

113. **Crop-full;** i.e., with full stomach. **Flings** = rushes.

115. **Creep.** Why is this word particularly expressive here?

117. Milton's fancy now turns from the rustics to the city and its pleasures. Many editors think Milton is describing one long day, a walk in the morning, an afternoon among the rustics, an evening of reading. It seems more reasonable to suppose that Milton is simply enumerating the pleasures which might entertain the "cheerful man" from time to time, as Milton imagines them. **Tower'd cities**, contrasted with "up-land hamlets" line 92.

120. **Weeds.** A poetic word for garments. Cf. *Comus*, 16, 84. **Triumphs** = tournaments, or even masques, pageants, etc. In these lines Milton is using the language of the tournament figuratively.

122. **Rain influence.** An expression borrowed from astrology. Cf. *Hymn on the Nut.*, l. 71.

125. **There let Hymen oft appear.** As in the masques celebrated in honor of a marriage, where Hymen was often introduced in a saffron-colored robe, carrying a torch. Ben Jonson in his *Hymenæi* gives an extended description of Hymen. See *Class. Dict.*

127-128. Forms of entertainment popular among the upper classes in the seventeenth century. **Pomp.** A solemn procession. Pombs were very popular at court. **Revelry.** A master of revels was appointed. The revels consisted of dances, masques, comedies, tragedies.

131. **Then.** Cf. l 117, above.

132. **If Jonson's learned sock be on;** i.e., one of Jonson's comedies. Ben Jonson was at this time the greatest comedy writer of the day. The sock, Latin *soccus*, was the low-heeled shoe worn by comedians; hence, the symbol of comedy. Cf. *buskined stage*, *Il P.*, 102. **Learned.** Appropriately applied to Jonson.

133. **Sweetest Shakespeare.** Milton is referring to Shakespeare as a writer of rural comedies. It shows the cheerful man's appreciation of Shakespeare's comedies. **Fancy's child.** Contrast with *learned* in the line above. Shakespeare, having no classical education, is looked upon by Milton as a *child of Fancy*, or natural genius.

134. **Warble his native wood-notes wild.** Shakespeare's comedies differed much from the scholarly productions of the time. They seemed rude and lawless; hence Milton's expression.

136. **Lydian airs.** The cheerful man wants to hear the softest and sweetest music. There were three styles of music among the Greeks, the Lydian, Phrygian, and Dorian. The Lydian was the soft, voluptuous music. Cf. Dryden's *Alex. Feast*, 79.

139. **Bout** = turn, or twist; hence, a musical passage.

141. **Wanton heed**, etc. There is an apparent contradiction between the adjectives and their nouns. "The adjectives describe the appearance, the nouns the reality." (Browne.)

145. **Orpheus.** For the story of Orpheus see *Class. Dict.* **Heave his head.** Cf. *Comus*, 885; *Par. Lost*, I, 211; also Dryden, *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, 5.

146. **Golden slumber.** Shakespeare frequently uses "golden sleep." *Golden* is figuratively used for *excellent*.

149. **Pluto.** God of Hades. See *Class. Dict.* **Quite.** Here used in its proper sense, contrasted with *half-regained*.

150. **Eurydice.** See the story of Orpheus in *Class. Dict.* See also *Il P.*, 105, *Lyc.*, 58, for other allusions to Orpheus.

## IL PENSERO SO.

NOTICE the parallelism between the first thirty lines of this poem and the first twenty-four of *L'Allegro*. The two exactly correspond. The same fact is noticeable throughout the two poems. The lines of the one always contrast with the corresponding lines of the other.

### LINEs.

1. Browne thinks that the commencement of the poem appears to have been suggested by a song in Fletcher's *Nice Valour* :—

“Hence, all you vain delights.”

2. **The brood of Folly**, etc.; i.e., pure folly: thus the thoughtful man looks at mirth.

3. **Bestead**. A word frequently used by the early poets in the sense of “avail.” Milton uses it only here.

4. **Fixed**. Sober, earnest. Cf. *Par. Lost*, Bk. I, 97; *F. Q.*, IV, vii, 16.

6. **Fond**. In old English *fond* meant *foolish*. It is here so used. Cf. *Comus*, 67; *Lyc.*, 56. Shakespeare, in *Richard II*, V, ii, 95, says:—

“Thou *fond* mad woman.”

7-8. Cf. Chaucer's line in the *Canterbury Tales* :—

“As thik as motis in the sonne-beem.”

10. **Pensioners**. Retainers or retinue. Queen Elizabeth had a guard of tall and handsome young men called *pensioners*. Shakespeare, *Mid. N. Dr.*, says:—

“The cowslips tall her pensioners be.”

**Morpheus**. See *Class. Dict.*

11. Cf. *L'All.*, 1. Note the contrast between the different views of melancholy.

14. **Hit**. A word used elsewhere by Milton (*Arc.* 77), and by Shakespeare (*Ant. and Cleop.* II, ii, 217), in the sense of *meet*, *encounter*.

16. It is not apparent why Milton makes *Wisdom's hue* black.

13-16. Perhaps Milton gets his idea from *Exodus*, xxxiv, 29-35.

17. **Prince Memnon's sister**. Memnon, King of Ethiopia, was an ally of the Trojans in the Trojan War, and was slain by Achilles. He was famous for his beauty. That he had any sister is doubtful. Milton's idea is more probably this: as Memnon was the fairest of men, his sister, if he had one, might be supposed to have been even more beautiful.

19. **That starr'd Ethiop queen**. Cassiope, wife of Cepheus, queen

of Ethiopia. See *Class. Dict.* She boasted herself to be more beautiful than the Nereids. **Starr'd.** Cassiope was placed among the stars.

**23. Bright-hair'd Vesta.** The following genealogy is Milton's own fancy. Vesta (see *Class. Dict.*) was the old Roman goddess of the fire-side; hence, the symbol of Retirement. Saturn (see *Class. Dict.*) was the god of Culture. Melancholy, or serious thought, is, then, the outcome of Retirement and Culture, a pretty fancy on the part of Milton.

**24. Solitary Saturn.** According to mythology, Saturn devoured his offspring as soon as born. See "Saturn," *Class. Dict.*

**29. Woody Ida.** There were several mountains of this name. See *Class. Dict.* The one near Troy is probably meant. Why?

**30. Yet.** Note the use of this word. What other use has it?

**31. Come, pensive Nun.** Cf. *L'All.*, 25. Note the beautiful comparison of Melancholy to a nun. State, from these lines, what Milton's conception of the ideal nun is.

**32. Demure.** French "des mœurs," of *strict morals*. Here means modest. The word to-day has acquired an unreal meaning suggestive of affectation.

**33. Grain** = Dye, or color; commonly thought to mean *purple* here, as Milton and other poets often use it in the sense of "Tyrian purple." As it refers to the dress of the nun, it would seem more reasonable to regard the word as meaning *black*.

**35. Stole.** The *stola* was the robe worn by Roman matrons. Milton probably means here the ecclesiastical *stole*, a long scarf, worn over the shoulders. Spenser in the *Faery Queene* uses *stole* as a hood, or veil, and that may, perhaps, be the meaning here. **Cyprus lawn** = crape. Black crape was manufactured in Cyprus from the wool (*lana* — *lawn*) produced there. It was much used in mourning.

**36. Decent.** Meaning? See *Web. Unab. Dict.*

**37. Keep thy wonted state;** i.e., sober, dignified behavior. **To keep state** was a familiar phrase in Milton's time, taken from the cloth of estate, or canopy, under which the throne was placed.

**39. Commercing.** Accent on the penult. This word is now used only in reference to trade; formerly it meant intercourse of any kind; hence, communion. Shakespeare and George Herbert thus use the word.

**41. Passion** = feeling. Meaning of *still*?

**42. Forget thyself to marble;** i.e., become like a marble statue, insensible to anything around. In Milton's *Epitaph on Shakespeare* we find:—

"Dost make us marble with too much conceiving."

**45. Note the change of rhythm to a more cheerful tone.** Cf. *L'All.*, 35.

**46. Spare.** What part of speech? **That oft with gods doth diet.** Explain.

**49. Retired Leisure.** Why does Milton apply the epithet *retired* to Leisure?

**50. Trim.** Meaning? Perhaps an allusion to the artificial style of gardening then in vogue.

51. Cf. *L'All.*, 35-36. **Chiefest.** Note the form.

52-54. Imagery borrowed from *Ezekiel*, chap. x. Masson says: "With Milton, as with other writers of his century, *contemplation* was a word of high meaning. It was by the serene faculty named contemplation that one attained the clearest notion of divine things — mounted, as it were, into the very blaze of the Eternal, or the sight of the Throne of God." Described at greater length in *Par. Lost*, VI, 750.

**54. Contemplation.** Spenser's Contemplation is an old man. See *F. Q. I*, x, 46. The word here has metrically five syllables. **Cherub.** For proper meaning see *Dict.* How is the word used here?

55. Is there tautology here? **Hist along** = bring along silently; i.e., "bid her come by whispering hist." (Masson.) Cf. *Hymn on the Nat.*, 64, "whist."

**56. Philomel** = lover of melody. The nightingale was so called from Philomela, a Greek maiden, who was changed into a nightingale. See *Class. Dict.*

**59. Cynthlia.** Diana. Cf. *Hymn on the Nat.*, 103. See also *Class. Dict.* **Dragon yoke.** Milton elsewhere makes the chariot of Diana drawn by dragons. It is probably another case of Milton mythologizing on his own account. According to mythology the chariot of Ceres was drawn by dragons. Night's dragons are twice referred to by Shakespeare, *Mid. N. Dr.*, III, ii, 379; *Cymbeline*, II, ii, 48.

**60. Accustom'd.** Explain.

**61. Sweet bird.** The nightingale was a favorite bird with Milton. He frequently pays tribute to her in his verse. See *Comus*, 234, 566; *Par. Lost*, IV, 602, 771, VII, 435. See also his *Sonnet to the Nightingale*.

**65. Unseen.** Cf. *L'All.*, 57. Some commentators see here evidence that Milton composed *Il Penseroso* before *L'Allegro*.

**67. Wandering moon.** A frequent fancy of the poets, especially the Italian. Cf. Shakespeare's *Mid. N. Dr.* "Swifter than the wandering moon." Whence the fancy?

71-72. A beautiful figure of Milton's own, perhaps the most beautiful in the poem, drawn from the fact that the moon seems to pass behind the clouds.

**74. Curfew.** Strictly "fire cover." It was applied to a bell rung at evening as a signal to put out the fires. Later it lost its significance, and was rung simply from custom.

75-76. Milton probably had some experience of his own in mind. **Wide-water'd shore** = over some shore which edges the river (Thames) for a long distance.

76. What is noticeable in this line? What is the effect?

78. **Removed** = retired. The word was formerly used in the sense of remote. Thus Shakespeare uses it, *Hamlet* I, iv, 65: —

"It [the ghost] waves you to a more removed ground."

80. The embers cast a dim light conducive to thought and meditation.

83. **The bellman's drowsy charm.** The bellman was the night-watchman. According to an old author, Stow, "He begun to go all night with a bell, and at every lane's end, and at the ward's end, gave warning of fire and candle, and to help the poor and pray for the dead." The custom is still retained in some of the German towns. Herrick, in his poem *The Bellman*, blesses his friends in the character of a bellman:—

"From noise of scare fires rest ye free,  
From murders benedicité;  
From all mischances that may fright  
Your pleasing slumbers in the night:  
Mercy secure ye all, and keep  
The goblin from ye while ye sleep!"

We can imagine the bellman after a time assuming a sleepy, singsong tone, which seemed to Milton "a drowsy charm."

87. **Outwatch the Bear.** The Bear is the constellation of the Great Bear, which in the latitude of England never sets: hence the expression here means "to sit up all night."

88. **Thrice-great Hermes.** Refers to Hermes Trismegistus, a fabled king and philosopher of Egypt, supposed to be a contemporary of Moses. Nothing reliable is known of him. Many books have been ascribed to him by the Neo-Platonists of the fifth century, A.D.; but they are probably forgeries. Perhaps Milton is here thinking of his *Pæmander*, which treats of the creation of the world, the soul, the deity, etc. **Unsphere;** i.e., call down from heaven.

89. **Plato.** A Greek philosopher and pupil of Socrates. See *Biog. Dict.* **To unfold,** etc.—to discuss the immortality of the soul, which is treated in the *Phædo*.

93. **And of those demons,** etc. There is a rhetorical zeugma or ellipsis here. Plato treats of demons or intelligences, "but this assigning them their abode in the four elements over which they had power, belongs to the later Platonists and writers of the Middle Ages." (Keightley.)

95. **Consent** = sympathy or harmony.

97. Contrast with *L'All.*, 131–134. Milton, no doubt, likens Tragedy to a king, and gives him the sceptre and robe of royalty, because many of the Attic tragedies, as well as later ones, centre about royal personages. Ovid gives Tragedy a sceptre.

99–100. Milton refers to the Greek dramatists Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the scenes of many of whose tragedies are laid at Thebes and Troy.

101–102. Milton undoubtedly refers to Shakespeare in these lines.

102. **Buskin'd.** The buskin was a high-heeled boot worn by tragedians. Cf. *L'All.*, 132.

104. **Musæus.** A mythical bard of Thrace. See *Class. Dict.*

106. **Warbled to the string.** Cf. *Arcades*, 87, "Sung to the Lyre."

**107. Iron tears.** Perhaps Milton had in mind Vergil's *ferrea vox*. By what fancy may Pluto be said to weep *iron tears*?

**109. Him that left half-told.** Chaucer (See *Biog. Dict.*), who wrote the *Canterbury Tales*. At his death the *Squier's Tale* was left unfinished.

**110. Cambuscan.** Cambus Khan, a famous king of Tartary, Cambal, Algarsife, and Canace, characters in the *Squier's Tale*. Cambal and Algarsife were sons of Cambus Khan. Canace was his daughter.

**113. Virtuous ring and glass.** This and the "horse of brass" are incidents referred to in the *Squier's Tale*. The King of Araby sent to Canace a magic ring and a mirror. By means of the ring the wearer could understand the language of birds, and the medicinal properties of herbs. The mirror reflected the falseness of friends and lovers. **Virtuous** = magic.

**114. Horse of brass.** This steed could convey any one who knew how to manage him any distance in a day.

**116-120.** These lines probably refer to Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser, of all of whom Milton was a great reader.

**120. Where more is meant,** etc.; i.e., where there is a deeper meaning than appears on the surface, an allusion to the allegorical style, as in Spenser's *Faery Queene*.

**122. Civil-suited morn.** In the sober dress of a citizen, in contrast with the showy costume of a courtier. Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, III, ii, 10:—

"Come, civil night,  
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black."

Contrast with *L'All.*, 61, 62.

**123. Trick'd.** Adorned. **Frounced.** Frizzled, or curled, applied to the dressing of the hair.

**124. The Attic boy.** Cephalus, an Athenian youth, with whom Eos, or Aurora, was in love.

**125. Kerchief'd.** The kerchief was originally a covering for the head.

**127. Still.** Meaning?

**130. Minute-drops.** Meaning of *minute*? Cf. "minute-guns."

**133. Twilight groves.** Where little light can enter.

**134. Sylvan.** Sylvanus, the Roman god of the woods.

**135. Monumental oak.** Explain.

**140. Profaner.** Used here in a strictly Latin sense. *Profane* means "before the temple." It was applied to those people who were not initiated into the sacred rites, and were obliged to stand outside the temple during the sacrifices. It would seem to signify here one who is not appreciative of the occasion.

**141. Garish.** Over bright. In *Rom. and Jul.*, III, ii, 25, Juliet speaks of the "garish sun."

**142. Honey'd thigh.** Milton falls into an error here. The bee collects its honey in its crop. Perhaps Milton borrowed the idea from Vergil, who makes the same mistake, *Eclogue*, I, 56.

146. **Dewy-feather'd.** Keightley explains this as follows, "with feathers steeped in Lethean dew."

147-150. A very difficult passage. Prof. Masson thus explains it, "Let some strange, mysterious dream wave (*i.e.*, move to and fro) at his wings (*i.e.*, the wings of sleep) in an airy stream of vivid images before my mental eye." Sleep is generally described by the poets as having Dreams for his attendants, and sending them forth. Spenser's *Faery Queene*, I, i, 44,

"And on his wings a Dream he bore."

153. **Good.** What does this adjective limit?

154. **Genius.** The masculine of nymph. A spirit of the woods. See *Arcades*, 44, for a description of the "Genius of the wood."

155. **Due**= dutiful.

156. **Studious cloister's pale;** *i.e.*, let him not forget his religious duties.

158. **Massy-proof**= proof against the mass they bear.

159. **With storied windows**, etc. Story is often used in the sense of history. Here the word means "with inscriptions from Bible history." **Dight.** Cf. *L'All.*, 62.

167. **Peaceful hermitage.** Milton uses the metaphor of the hermitage to mean a retired spot; *i.e.*, the retirement which belongs to old age. It is interesting to compare Milton's desire with his actual experience in the last years of his life.

169. **The hairy gown.** Milton may have had in mind Elijah and John the Baptist.

172. Milton speaks in one of his works of his hopes of being assisted in the study of botany by his friend Charles Diodati.

173. An allusion to astrology.

## COMUS.

NOTE that the introductory speech of the Attendant Spirit is a sort of prologue explaining the purport of the poem. While prologues are common in old English plays, this one seems more after the style of Euripides.

### LINES.

2. **Mansion.** Not a house, but an abiding place. Cf. *John*, xiv, 2.

3. **Inspher'd.** Some words seem to be favorites with Milton. One of these is *sphere*, with its various compounds. Milton always uses the word with some reference to the Ptolemaic system. Cf. *Il. P.*, 88-91; *Arcades*, 64. *Hymn on the Nat.*, 125.

7. **Pester'd.** This word has excited much comment among editors, but seems to be used in its modern sense of *annoyed*. In this *pinfold*. *Pinfold* probably means sheepfold. It is akin to our word *pound*, an enclosure for strayed cattle.

10. **After this mortal change.** Masson explains this phrase as "after this mortal state of life." It seems rather to mean after this change from mortality to immortality.

11. **Enthron'd.** Dissyllabic, accent on the first syllable.

13. **Golden key.** Tradition assigns to St. Peter two keys, a golden one to open, and an iron one to shut, the gates of heaven. See *Lyc.*, 110-111.

16. **Ambrosial weeds.** The real meaning of *ambrosial* is *immortal*, whence *heavenly*. *Weeds*, cf. *L'All.*, 120.

20. Milton takes his idea from the *Iliad*, Book XV, 190 *et seq.* After Saturn had been deposed, his three sons, Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, divided the Universe by lot. Jupiter obtained Heaven in the air and in the clouds, Neptune the sea, and Pluto Hades, or the Infernal Regions. **Nether Jove** is Pluto.

25. **Several** = separate. Cf. *Hymn on the Nat.*, 234.

27. **This Isle**; i.e., Great Britain. Cf. Shakespeare, *Rich. II*, II, i, 40:—

"This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle."

29. **Blue-hair'd deities.** *Green-haired* is the usual poetic epithet for the sea-gods. In some of the old masques they were represented with blue hair, symbolic of the color of the waves, hence Milton's expression.

30. All this tract, etc.; i.e., Wales.

31-33. A noble peer. A compliment to the Earl of Bridgewater, before whom the play was given. It is worthy of note that in the course of the play Milton contrives to pay a compliment to all who are mainly concerned in its performance.

31. Mickle, original form of *much*. The word does not occur elsewhere in Milton.

33. A compliment to the Welshmen who were probably in the audience.

37. Perplex'd = entangled. Accent on first syllable.

38. Nodding horror. *Horror*, Latin *horreo*, bristle. Milton appears to borrow the word direct from Vergil. The expression here refers only to the bristling boughs as they nod.

45. Hall or bower. Notice the distinction between these two words. The "hall" was the principal room of the castle, while the "bower" was the lady's chamber. The phrase is a frequent one with Spenser and the old minstrel poets.

46-49. The seizure of Bacchus by Tyrrhenian pirates, and their transformation into dolphins, is told by Ovid, *Met.*, III, 630 *et seq.* The bringing of Bacchus to Circe's island is an invention of Milton's to suit his purpose here.

48. After the Tuscan mariners transform'd. A cumbrous construction, a Latinism = post Tuscos nautas mutatos; i.e., after the transformation of the Tuscan mariners.

50. On Circe's island fell. The Circe myth is told by Homer, *Odyssey*, X, also by Vergil, *Aeneid*, VII, 10, *et seq.* Who knows not Circe? A figure common in Spenser and other writers.

56. This parentage of Comus is an invention of Milton, as are also the traits of his character. Cf. *L'All.*, 11-16.

60. Celtic and Iberian fields; i.e., France and Spain.

61. Ominous wood; i.e., this wood full of portents and magical appearances. In Shropshire, on the Welsh border.

65. Orient liquor. *Orient* literally means "eastern," but sometimes used in the sense of "sparkling," perhaps from the sparkling gems that came from the East. Cf. *Par. Lost*, I, 546.

67. Fond. Cf. *Il P.*, 6. The original meaning of the word was "foolish," and is so used by Shakespeare. Cf. *King Lear*, IV, vii, 60.

71. Ounce. A kind of lynx. See *Dict.*

72-77. Milton deviates from Homer's account of Circe's victims, in which they are changed entirely to beasts. Masson notes that this partial change suited better the stage purposes, being more convenient for presentation. Circe's victims were also sensible of their degradation. Probably Milton intends that his lines shall have a moral significance, that whoever partakes of sensual indulgence becomes a beast, and forgets his better self.

79. This adventurous glade; i.e., this wood full of dangers. Cf. ominous wood, line 61.

80. The simile of a shooting star is common in the poets. Cf. *Par. Lost*, I, 745. Note how the rhythm of the line reproduces the motion described.

83. **Spun out of Iris' woof.** Cf. *Par. Lost*, XI, 244, "Iris had dipt the woof." Iris was the goddess of the rainbow, hence the expression means having the tints of the rainbow.

84-91. A compliment to Mr. Lawes and his musical abilities. Mr. Lawes played the part of the Attendant Spirit.

88. **Nor of less faith;** i.e., not less faithful in duty than skilful in music.

93. Comus enters, followed by his crew of monsters. This is what is termed the Anti-Masque, or comic interlude. Note the change of metre for this lyric song. Some of the lines are iambic, some are trochaic.

93. **The star that bids,** etc. The evening star. Keightley calls to mind Shakespeare's exactly opposite expression, *Meas. for Meas.*, IV, ii, 218, "Look, the unfolding star calls up the shepherd."

95-97. Alludes to the chariot of the Sun-God. The idea of the classical poets was that the waters of the Atlantic hissed as the sun's chariot plunged into them.

97. **Steep.** Refers to the descent of the sun into the Atlantic. Browne thinks *steep* means "deep."

98. **The slope sun;** i.e., the declining sun. Cf. *Par. Lost*, IV, 539-543.

99. I.e., shoots towards the darkening zenith.

100-101. For the imagery cf. *Psalm*, xix. 5.

102-105. We are frequently reminded in Comus and his followers of Mirth and her companions. Cf. *L'All.*, 26 *et seq.* Note in both the rhythm of a tripping variety. But in *L'Allegro* the pleasures are "unreproved," and take place in the day time; those of Comus are licentious and occur in the darkness. Probably Milton had seen many of the qualities that he personifies allegorically represented in the masques of his time.

105. **Rosy twine;** i.e., with roses entwined.

110. **Saws.** Sayings, maxims.

111. **Of purer fire;** i.e., of purer or finer composition. Alluding to the old belief that everything was composed of the four elements. Fire and air, being lighter, were appropriate for spirits.

112. **Starry quire.** An allusion to the music of the spheres. See *Hymn on the Nat.*, 125; *Arcades*, 63-73.

115. **The sounds and seas;** i.e., the shallow waters and the deep seas.

116. **Wavering morrice;** i.e., in wavering dance. The *morrice* or *morris* was an old Moorish dance brought to England from Spain. Note the beautiful figure of the waters undulating in the moonlight as if dancing. Cf. Shakespeare's *Henry V*, II, ii, 25; *All's Well*, II, ii, 25.

118. **Pert fairies—dapper elves.** Pert is "nimble." *Dapper* really means "brave," whence "bold," "smart." There is no real distinction between fairies and elves.

**121. Wakes and pastimes.** A "wake" was originally a watching before a church celebration, a vigil. As wakes were later spent in feasting, they came to signify "merrymaking." Pastimes are amusements.

126-127. These lines bring out the contrast between the pleasures of Mirth and those of Comus.

**129. Dark-veil'd Cotytto.** Cotys or Cotytto was a Thracian divinity, worshipped at night with licentious rioting.

**132. Spets.** An old form of *spits*, used by the writers of Milton's day. It means "ejects."

**135. Hecat.** This is the form in earlier editions to show that it is disyllabic. Shakespeare and other poets use the form. Cf. *Mid. N. Dr.* V, i, 391; *Macbeth*, II, i, 52. Hecate is a somewhat obscure personage in mythology, probably of Thracian origin. Being a moon-goddess she presided over nocturnal horrors, as sorcery, witches, etc.

138-142. An old fancy that the sun reveals the mysteries of the night. Cf. *2 Henry VI*, IV, i, 1; *Rape of Lucrece*, 806:—

"Make me not object to the tell-tale day."

**Nice.** Here used in a sarcastic sense; i.e., "prudish."

144. Cf. *L'All.*, 34. **Round** was a country dance. At this point Comus and his crew dance a measure. Suddenly he speaks in a different strain.

145. **The different pace**; i.e., a different step.

147. **Shrouds**; i.e., hiding-places.

151. **Wily trains** = cunning snares. Cf. *Macbeth*, IV, iii, 118; Spenser's *F. Q.*, I, ix, 31.

153-154. **Thus I hurl . . . spongy air.** Here he probably throws into the air some powder which by a device flashes.

155. **Blear.** Deceptive; i.e., it blears the eyes and makes them dim.

157. **Habits.** Meaning?

161. **Glozing.** Flattering. Cf. *Par. Lost*, III, 93; also our word "gloss." See *Dict.*

167. **Gear** = business. Cf. Spenser's *F. Q.*, VI, iii, 6; also *Rom. and Jul.*, II, iv, 107. This line is not found in the 1673 edition.

169. Comus here retires.

174. **Unletter'd hinds.** Ignorant peasants.

175. **Granges** = granaries.

176. **Pan.** The tutelary god of shepherds. See *Hymn on the Nat.*, 89.

178. **Swill'd insolence** = drunken insolence.

188-190. Note the beautiful simile. Evening, like a venerable palmer (pilgrim), follows the chariot of the Day.

195-235. These lines are omitted in the Bridgewater MS., probably to lighten the part of the young lady.

195. **Stole.** The Cambridge MS. has *stolne*. Keightley regards *stole* as a printer's error.

205-209. **A thousand fantasies . . . wildernesses.** "The *Tempest* may have suggested the whole imagery." (Browne.) It seems more

probable that Milton drew on the superstitions of the day for his imagery.

208. **Airy tongues**; i.e., tongues of spirits.

212. **Conscience**. Dissyllabic.

215. **Chastity**. Charity is the usual companion of Faith and Hope.

219. **Glistening**. For "glistening," akin to "glittering." Milton and Shakespeare use "glisten" for "glisten" altogether.

221. The rift in the clouds seems a good omen.

223-224. A verbal repetition, a device occasionally used by Milton with good effect. Cf. *Par. Lost*, VII, 25-26:—

"Though fallen on evil days,  
On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues."

230. **Sweet Echo**. Note in this exquisite song the irregular metre, and the last four irregular rhymes, both of which seem to lend an indescribable charm to it. Some editors think Milton may have had in mind Ben Jonson's invocation to Echo in his *Cynthia's Revels*. This notion seems hardly warranted. Invocations to Echo were a frequent fancy of masque writers, and Milton probably adopted it for the stage effect, as well as to give the musicians an opportunity.

231. **Airy shell**. This phrase is commonly interpreted to mean the "hollow vault of the atmosphere," (cf. *Hymn on the Nat.*, 102). This interpretation is unsatisfactory. It leaves "thy" unexplained. Some take "shell" literally as a sea-shell in which Echo, like the Nymphs, dwells, still others regard shell as a musical shell which gives back the notes which it receives. It is not well to probe a figure too deeply; it kills the beauty. The interpretation to me the most reasonable, and yet retaining the poetic touch, is that "shell" refers to the body or form of Echo. Milton frequently uses "airy" in the sense of "unsubstantial" or "spirit." (See above, l. 208; also *Il P.*, 148); and if we remember the mythological story, how Echo pined away, and her material body disappeared, leaving nothing but her voice, "airy shell" might well be applied to her form.

232. **Slow Meander's margent green**. The Meander is a river in Asia Minor, celebrated for its tortuous course (whence our word meander). There seems to be no classical authority for associating Echo with the Meander. **Margent**=margin. Shakespeare uses the form *marget* invariably.

234. **Love-lorn nightingale**; i.e., as if deprived of her love. The nightingale very appropriately sings to Echo, whose love for Narcissus was not reciprocated.

237. **Narcissus**. See *Class. Dict.*

241. **Daughter of the sphere**. This passage is obscure. It seems to mean that Echo had its origin in the hollow sphere of space. Cf. *At a Solemn Music*, l. 2:—

"Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse."

243. **Give resounding grace**; i.e., by echoing them.

244-245. A somewhat extravagant compliment to Lady Alice Egerton.  
 248. **His** = its, and refers to "something holy." Milton generally avoids "its."

251-252. Note the suggestiveness of the metaphor.

251. **Fall** = cadence.

253. Milton here follows his own fancy in his mythological allusions. In Homer *Circe* sings, but not with the nymphs, and she has nothing to do with the Sirens. The Sirens, however, are called the Singing Maidens. For the *Sirens* and *Naiades* see *Class. Dict.*

254. **Flowery-kirtled**; i.e., having their garments decorated with flowers.

257. **Scylla wept**, etc. See *Class. Dict.* Scylla was a rock on the Italian side, and Charybdis was a whirlpool on the Sicilian side of the Straits of Messina, both alike perilous to sailors. Milton follows Ovid, and not Homer, in making Scylla and Charybdis near the island of Circe.

258. **Her barking waves**. The noise of the waves resembled the barking of dogs. Vergil, *Aeneid*, VII, 588, has "Multis circum latranti-bus undis."

262. **Home-felt**. Heartfelt.

265. **Hall, foreign wonder!** Cf. Shakespeare's *Tempest*, I, ii, 427-429.

"Oh you wonder!  
If you be maid or no."

287. "Unless thou be the goddess," etc.

268. Sylvanus, god of the woods, was in later times identical with Pan, the god of Nature.

271. **Ill is lost**. Latin idiom, "male perditur." (Keightley.)

273. **Shift** = difficulty, distress. **Extreme**, accented on the penult.

277-290. Keightley notes that these lines are an imitation of those scenes of Greek tragedy where the dialogue proceeds in single lines.

278. **Leavy**. The reading in both of Milton's editions. Many editors change to "leafy," but Milton probably intended *leavy* for the soft *v* sound. Notice the alliteration in this line.

287. **Imports their loss**; i.e., is their loss important?

290. **Hebe**. See *L'All.*, 29.

291. **What time** (Latin *quo tempore*), i.e., at the time when. Cf. *Lyc.*, 28. A frequent idiom with the old poets. This method of noting the time is common in pastoral poetry.

293. **Swink'd** = tired.

297-301. A compliment to Viscount Brackley and Mr. Thomas Egerton, who took the parts of the two brothers.

299. **The element**; i.e., the air or sky.

301. **Plighted**. Folded. Shakespeare, *King Lear*, I, i, 283:

"Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides."

*Plighted* is akin to *plait*, not to *pledge*.

312. **Dingle**. A small valley between two steep hills.

**313. Bosky bourn.** **Bosky**=woody. Shakespeare uses the word twice, but it is spelled *busky*. **Bourn** is akin to Scottish *burn*, a stream, and is to be distinguished from *bourn*, a boundary.

**315. Attendance;** i.e., attendants.

**316. Shroud;** i.e., sheltered. It is here a verb. Note the form. Cf. l. 147.

**317-318. The low-roosted lark . . . rouse.** Keightley criticises this figure as savoring rather of the henhouse than of the lark's resting-place. As has before been said we should not try to dissect a figure too far. Milton saw with the eye of a poet and not of a scientist. He does not intend to be accurate, but rather to employ figure with a poet's license. **Low-roosted** refers to the lark building its nest on the ground. **Thatched** refers to the texture of the nest.

**329. Square my trial,** etc.; i.e., measure or adapt my trial.

**332. Benison,** from Old French *beneison*, a blessing, benediction. Cf. *Macbeth*, II, iv, 40; "God's benison go with you."

333. Cf. *Il P.*, 71-72.

**334. Disinherit**=dispossess. Shakespeare uses *inherit* in the sense "possess;" *Rom. and Jul.*, I, ii, 30.

**337-339.** An awkward construction. The meaning seems to be, "Do thou, gentle taper, . . . visit us."

340.\*Note how the sound echoes the sense. How true to fact!

**341-342. Arcady—Tyrian Cynosure;** i.e., our guiding star. *Arcady* is the constellation of the Great Bear, *Cynosure*, the constellation of the Lesser Bear, or the pole star in it. Cf. *L'All.*, 80. The Tyrian sailors steered their course by it. According to mythology, Calisto, daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia, was turned into the Great Bear, and her son Areas into the Lesser Bear.

**344. Wattled cotes.** Sheepfolds made of withes.

**345. Pastoral reed with oaten stops.** The traditional shepherd's pipe. Cf. *Lyc.*, 33, 88.

**349. Innumerous**=innumerable. Cf. *Par. Lost*, VII, 455.

**350-375.** These lines contain the central doctrine on which the Masque turns.

**356.** Notice the ellipsis: "What, if she may wander in wild amazement," etc.

**359. Over-exquisite**=too inquisitive.

**360. To cast the fashion,** etc. A figure of casting a nativity, probably taken from astrology. The idea is "of predicting doubtful evils."

**366. So to seek;** i.e., so at a loss.

**367. Unprincipled**=ignorant.

**372. Plight.** Cf. *Il P.*, 57.

**373-374.** Milton may have had in mind Spenser's *F. Q.*, I, i, 12:

"Virtue gives her selfe light through darkness for to wade."

**Cf.** also *Rom. and Jul.* III, ii, 8-9:—

"Lovers can see to do their amorous rites  
By their own beauties."

375-380. **And Wisdom's self**, etc. Mr. Pattison remarks that these lines are a fragment of the poet's autobiography, descriptive of his life at Horton for five years.

376. **Seeks to** = resorts to, a common idiom in Milton's day.

377. **Contemplation**. Cf. *Il P.*, 51, where Contemplation is made the "first and chiefest" companion of Melancholy.

378. **Plumes**. Some editors change *plumes* to *prunes*; i.e., dresses or arranges. This is neither warranted nor necessary, for *plumes* is found in the same sense. See *Dict.*

380. **All to-ruffled**. The meaning of this phrase has excited considerable comment. The best opinion seems to be that *to* has an intensive force, emphasizing the verb, and that the compound is strengthened by *all*. The whole phrase seems to mean "completely ruffled."

381-382. These lines seem prophetic of Milton's last years. Cf. *Par. Lost*, I, 254-255.

382. **Centre**; i.e., the centre of the earth, in utter darkness.

392. **Maple dish**; i.e., his wooden dish. Elsewhere Milton speaks of the *beechen bowl*. A case of synecdoche.

393-395. An allusion to the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides, which were watched day and night by the sleepless dragon Ladon.

398. **Unsunnd'd**; i.e., secreted from the light of day.

401. **Danger will wink**, etc.; i.e., danger will shut its eyes to the opportunity. Cf. *Acts*, xvii, 30; *Macbeth*, I, iv, 52. The passage recalls Rosalind's words in *As You Like It*, I, 3: "Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold."

403. **It recks me not**. An impersonal construction, a Latinism. "I do not care."

407. **Unowned** = unprotected.

408. **Infer**. Argue. Cf. *Par. Lost*, VII, 116.

410. **Equal poise**. Our word equipoise, equal weight.

413. **Squint suspicion**. Cf. Spenser's description of Suspicion, *F. Q.*, III, xii, 15: —

"Under his eiebrows looking still askaunce."

421-422. The chaste Diana of mythology was armed with a bow and quiver. Milton may have had in mind Spenser's description of Belphœbe, personification of Chastity, *F. Q.*, II, iii, 29: —

"At her back a bow and quiver gay,  
Stuft with steel-headed dargets, wherewith she queld  
The salvage beastes in her victorious play."

424. **Infamous . . . perilous**. Note that the rhythm requires that *infamous* be accented on the penult, and *perilous* be dissyllabic. *Infamous*, of evil, is Horace's *infames* in *infames scopulos*.

425. **Mountaineer**. Used in an opprobrious sense. People who live in mountainous districts may readily be taken for fierce and uncivilized. Shakespeare, in *Cymbeline*, IV. ii, 120, has "called me traitor, mountaineer."

428. **Very.** Notice the use of the word as an adjective. A common use in Shakespeare. Cf. the Creed, "Very God of Very God."

429. Pope has reproduced this line: —

"Ye grots and caverns, shagged with horrid thorn."

430. **Unblench'd; i.e., unterrified.**

432. **Some say no evil thing, etc.** Undoubtedly Milton had in mind the passage in *Hamlet*, I, i, 173-179: "Some say that ever against that season," etc. Ghosts, goblins, and evil spirits were thought to walk abroad at night from curfew to cockcrow.

434. **Blue meagre hag; i.e., haggard-looking, lean hag.**

436. **Of the mine.** It was an old superstition that mines were inhabited by evil spirits.

438-439. The brother has been quoting popular superstitions of the day. He now has recourse to Grecian legend to prove his doctrine.

441-452. In these lines Milton adopts Plato's style of philosophy; i.e., he takes two popular legends and interprets them metaphysically.

444-445. **Set at naught, etc.** Diana, the chaste goddess, was insensible to the arrows of Cupid — i.e., to the power of love.

447. **Snaky-headed Gorgon.** See *Gorgo* in *Class. Dict.* Perseus slew Medusa or the Gorgon, and presented her head to Minerva, who fixed it on her shield. It turned all who looked upon it to stone.

451. **Dash'd = confounded.**

453-475. In these lines, in a Platonic strain, Milton expresses his mind on the purity of the soul.

459-469. Here we find another doctrine of Milton's own philosophy, that by a sort of disciplinary education the body may become identical with the soul, a doctrine further developed in *Par. Lost*, V., 469-503. Likewise the soul, by sensual indulgence, may sink into identity with the body. /

468. **Imbodies and imbrutes.** Becomes sensual and brutal.

470-475. Milton here adapts a passage of Plato's *Phædo*. "She (the impure soul) is engrossed by the corporeal, which the continual association and constant care of the body have made natural to her. . . . And this, my friend, may be conceived to be that heavy, weighty, earthly element of sight by which such a soul is depressed and dragged down again into the visible world, . . . prowling about tombs and sepulchres, in the neighborhood of which, they tell us, are seen certain ghostly apparitions of souls which have not departed pure, but are cloyed with sight, and therefore visible."

474. **Sensuality.** Some editors have changed to sensuality. Both the 1645 and 1673 editions have sensuality, and the metre requires it.

478. Milton borrows this phrase from Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV, iii, 342: —

"As sweet and musical  
As bright Apollo's lute." —

Shakespeare uses the phrase with reference to love. Milton has transferred it to philosophy.

**484. Night-founder'd; i.e., benighted.** A metaphor. Swallowed up in night as a ship is swallowed up in the sea.

**490. That halloo I should know.** These words might be readily assigned to the Attendant Spirit, but they are distinctly printed in both of Milton's editions as a continuation of the elder brother's speech.

**491. Iron stakes; i.e., their swords.**

**494-496.** Another compliment to Lawes, but professedly to the shepherd Thyrasis. For Thyrasis, see *L'All.*, 83.

**495. Madrigal.** Literally a shepherd's song, from the Italian *madrigale*, but in music an elaborate musical composition. Lawes himself composed such madrigals. The word is here used literally.

**495-512.** Note that the following eighteen lines are rhymed couplets, heroic measure. Why this introduction of rhymes into blank verse? Has it any significance? Masson suggests that Milton, having spoken of the madrigal (a pastoral song) wishes to prolong the pastoral idea by using rhythm common to pastoral poetry; also, perhaps as a further compliment to Lawes.

**508. How chance she is not, etc.** A Shakesperian idiom. Cf. *Mid. N. Dr.*, I, i, 129:—

“How chance the roses there do fade so fast?”

Abbott, in his Shakesperian Grammar, regards *chance* as a kind of adverb. “By what chance is she not with you?”

**515. What the sage poets.** Cf. *L'All.*, 19; *Il P.*, 117. In this and the following lines Milton refers to Homer and Vergil. Homer sang of the Chimera, and of the enchanted isles of Circe, Calypso, and others. Spenser and Tasso also sang of enchanted isles. Vergil describes the descent of Orpheus to hell through *rifited rocks*.

**517. Chimeras.** Cf. *Par. Lost*, II, 628. A monster, according to Homer, with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a dragon's tail, placed by Vergil at the gates of hell.

**520. Navel = centre.**

**526. With many murmurs mixed; i.e., incantations spoken over the potion.** Cf. the song of witches in *Macbeth*, IV, i.

**529. Unmoulding reason's mintage.** A metaphor taken from the mint. The idea is that the liquor defaces what Reason stamps. In Milton Reason is the chief faculty of the soul.

**530. Character'd.** Accent on the penult. Shakespeare uses the word thus several times. Cf. *Two Gent. of Ver.*, II, vii, 4.

**531. The hilly crofts.** Enclosed fields on the slopes of the hills. Keightley thinks Milton uses the word incorrectly. See *Webster's Dict.*

**534. Stabled wolves.** Wolves in their haunts, or perhaps wolves that have got into the sheepfold.

**539. Unweeting; i.e., unwitting,** cf. *Par. Lost*, x, 335.

**540. By then = by the time that.**

**547. To meditate my rural minstrelsy;** i.e., to play on my shepherd's pipe. The 1673 edition has *meditate upon*, which Masson thinks to be a misprint. Cf. *Lyc.*, 66; Vergil's *Eclogue*, I. 2.

548. **Ere a close**; i.e., ere I had finished my song. Cf. *Hymn on the Nat.*, 100. *Close* here has a technical use.

549. **Roar was up**; i.e., the noise was begun.

551. **Listened them**. Note the transitive use of the verb. Cf. Shakespeare, *Jul. Cæs.*, IV, i, 41: "Listen great things." Also *Much Ado*, III, i, 11-12: "To listen our purpose."

552. **Unusual stop**. The pupil will recall line 145.

553. **Drowsy frighted steeds**. This phrase has caused much discussion. Both of Milton's editions give "drowsie frighted," but the Cambridge MS. has "drowsy flighted." Masson inserts a hyphen, and adopts, with some hesitation, the form "drowsy-flighted," i.e., "always drowsily flying," which he regards as a peculiarly Miltonic epithet. This form is certainly more poetical and picturesque; but the weight of authority seems to favor "drowsy frighted," i.e., the drowsy steeds of night frightened by the noise of Comus. Here "*drowsy*" would refer to the habitual character of the steeds, and "*frighted*" to a sudden start caused by the noise.

556. **Like a steam**. The edition of 1673 has *stream*, evidently a misprint, for it would spoil the metaphor.

557-560. **Silence . . . so displac'd**. Waston considered these lines a daring conceit, unworthy of the poet. Milton expresses much the same idea in *Par. Lost*, IV, 604: "Silence was pleased." The idea here seems to be, that Silence is so carried away by the song that she wishes she may cease to exist if she is to be displaced by such singing.

560. **Still** = always. Frequent in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II, ii, 42.

561-562. **And took in strains . . . ribs of Death**. A somewhat fanciful idea. It seems to mean nothing more than that the music was such as to bring the dead to life.

567. **How sweet thou sing'st**. Cf. *Il P.*, 56-57.

568. **Lawns**. Cf. *L'All.*, 71. Milton generally uses this word to denote any open stretch of grassy field.

585. **Period** = sentence.

586-599. "A peculiarly Miltonic passage; one of those that ought to be got by heart both on its own account and in memory of Milton." (Masson.)

591. **Meant most harm**; i.e., meant to be most harmful.

594-597. The idea is that Evil, separated from Good, shall rise like scum, then devour and consume itself.

598. **Pillar'd firmament**. The firmament is regarded as the roof of the earth, and supported on pillars. To Milton it was suggestive of firmness.

604. **Under the sooty flag of Acheron**. Acheron was a river in the lower world. It is here used for Hell. It is often so used by the classical poets.

605. **Harpies and Hydras**. See *Class. Dict.* Symbolic of monsters of the lower world.

606. **\*Twixt Africa and Ind.** "The region of black enchantments." (Masson.)

**607. Purchase.** Often used by the older poets for anything acquired by theft, i.e., booty. Cf. Spenser's *F. Q.*, VI, ii, 12:—

“Was his own purchas and his onely prize.”

**611. Stead** = service. Cf. *Il P.*, 3, *bestead*.

**614. Bare wand.** In fable and romance the wand is the symbol of supernatural power. **Unthread thy joints**; i.e., take out the ligaments like threads, and render the joints useless.

**617. Relation**; i.e., report, an old meaning seen in the verb *relate*.

**618. Surprisal**, for *surprise*. For the form compare *reprisal*, *requital*.

**619–628. A certain shepherd lad**, etc. Editors have detected here an affectionate reference to his friend Charles Diodati, a medical student. He died in 1638; and Milton composed the *Epitaphium Damonis* in his memory, in which he mentioned Diodati's skill in the medicinal properties of herbs, and his habit of regaling Milton with the same.

**620. Of small regard to see to**; i.e., of little importance to look at. If the reference is to Diodati, it would imply that he was of puny appearance.

**621. Virtuous plant**; i.e., a plant of healing power or magic virtue. Cf. *Il P.* 113.

**626. Scrip.** Pouch or bag. Original form was “*scrap*,” because made of a scrap of stuff” (Skeat). The word is frequently used in the Bible. See *Matthew*, x, 10, *Luke*, xvii, 35.

**627. Simples**; i.e., simple remedies. A simple was one of the ingredients of a compound, especially a medicine; hence it came to mean a medicinal herb. Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, V, i, 40, “Culling of simples.”

**630. The flower** here described is probably from Milton's fancy.

**634. Like**; i.e., correspondingly. Unknown to people in general and as little esteemed.

**635. Clouted shoon.** Patched shoes, a hackneyed expression in Milton's day. Cf. *2 Henry VI*, IV, ii, 195:—

“Spare none but such as go in clouted shoon.”

**636. That moly.** The name of the plant that Hermes gave Ulysses to withstand the charms of Circe, *Odyssey*, X, 305. Notice the metre of this line.

**638. He call'd it hæmony.** This name is Milton's own invention for his fancied plant. Some editors have tried to connect the name with Hæmonia, the old name of Thessaly, the land of magic; but there seems to be no authority for any such surmise.

**643. Little reckoning made.** Cf. *Lyc.*, 116.

**644–647.** Warton points out that it was a recognized expedient in mediæval tales for a knight to carry a charm to ward off evil influences.

**646. Lime-twigs.** Snare. It was the custom to smear the limbs of trees with a viscous substance (bird-lime) to entrap birds. Shakespeare frequently uses this metaphor, *All's Well*, III, v, 26.

**650–651.** Ulysses attacked Circe with a drawn sword; and in the

*Faerie Queene*, II, xii, 57, Guyon seizes and breaks the cup of the sorceress Acrasia.

655. Vergil, *Aeneid*, VIII, 252-253, describes the giant Cacus, son of Vulcan, as vomiting forth smoke in his combat with Hercules.

659. Lines 659-813 are the most effective part of *Comus* from a dramatic point of view.

662-663. **Or as Daphne was**, etc. Daphne, as she fled from Apollo, was changed to a laurel-tree, according to Ovid.

664. **Corporal rind**; i.e., the body. —

669. Browne quotes Tennyson's line: —

"In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."

672. **Cordial julep**. Cheering drink. Cordial means *hearty*, hence cheering. Julep was originally rose-water, thence any sweet drink. Not found elsewhere in Milton's verse.

673. **Flames and dances**; i.e., sparkles.

675. **Nepenthes**. This was the opiate which, according to Homer, Helen gave to Menelaus. She received it from Polydamna, an Egyptian woman, wife of Thone. It had the power of making one forget sorrow and grief.

682. **Invert the covenants of her trust**; i.e., subvert the contract which Nature made in entrusting you with such beauty.

685. **Unexempt condition**. The condition most binding; i.e., of taking refreshment after toil.

688. **That**. Refers to *you*, line 682.

694. **Grim aspects**. A phrase identical with Shakespeare. See *Rape of Lucrece*, 452. Cf. also Spenser, *F. Q.*, V, ix, 48. *Aspect*, accent on final syllable.

695. **Ugly-headed**. Milton has "oughly-headed" in both his editions. Masson defends it on the ground, that as Milton has "ugly" elsewhere, he probably intended "oughly" here for a more guttural effect.

696. **Brew'd enchantments**. See line 526; "with many murmurs mixed."

698. **Visor'd falsehood**; i.e., disguised falsehood.

700. **Liquerish**. In some editions spelled "lickerish." Dainty baits. Cf. Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, IV, iii, 194.

703. An idea borrowed, perhaps, from Euripides (*Medea*, 618), "The gifts of a bad man possess no delight."

707. **Budge doctors of the Stoic fur**. The word "budge" is really a noun meaning lamb's wool or fur. At Cambridge it denoted the rank of the student. This probably gave rise to the use of the adjective "budge" in the sense of *scholastic* or *pedantic*, thence *stiff*, *formal*, which is probably the meaning here. *Fur* is here simply a cloak. It is used symbolically. **Stoic**. The Stoics and Cynics despised the pleasures of the senses, and were stiff and austere.

708. **The Cynic tub**. The tub of Diogenes the Cynic.

710-755. Mark the argument of the sensualist, forcibly and succinctly put.

711. **Unwithdrawing**; i.e., lavish, a word of Milton's own coining.

719. **Hutch'd**; i.e., stored. Hutch is a chest or bin.

721. **Pulse**. Peas and beans.

722. **Frieze**. Coarse woollen cloth, made chiefly in Wales, but originally in Friesland, whence the name.

729. **Strangled**; i.e., suffocated. Shakespeare so uses it. Desdemona is strangled. Juliet fears to be strangled in the vault.

732. **The unsought diamonds**. Diamonds hardly belong to the sea. Probably Milton refers to the old idea so well expressed by Gray in the *Elegy* : —

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear."

734. **They below**; i.e., those on earth.

739-755. **Beauty is Nature's coin**, etc. A favorite idea with the old poets. Todd and Warton cite parallel passages from Shakespeare, Spenser, Fletcher, and Drayton.

750. **Of sorry grain**; i.e., of poor color. Cf. *Il P.*, 33.

751. **Sampler**. Needlework. **Tease**. Card, an original meaning of the word.

755. **You are but young yet**. Lady Alice Egerton was 14 years old at this time. It is worth noting in this connection that lines 737-755 are not in the Bridgewater copy, and were, therefore, not spoken at the actual performance.

756-761. These lines are said aside.

759. **Prank'd**. Dressed or decked out. An old word used by Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare to mean "affectedly dressed."

760. **Bolt**. A term used by millers meaning to separate the meal from the bran; i.e., to refine it; hence its figurative use here. Cf. Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, III, i, 322, also *Wint. Tale*, IV, iv, 375.

764. **Cateress**. Feminine of *caterer*. A word of Milton's invention probably.

767. **Spare**. Cf. *Il P.*, 46, "Spare Fast." There is a bit of irony here in answer to the words of Comus in line 721.

768. **If every just man**, etc. We are reminded of Gloster's speech in *King Lear*, IV, i, 73-74.

773. **Unsuperfluous**; i.e., not over-abundant. Note the metre of this line. *Proportion* is quadrisyllabic.

779-806. These lines are wanting in the Cambridge and Bridgewater MSS. Milton probably introduced them on revising *Comus* in 1645, to bring out his favorite moral.

782. **Sun-clad power of chastity**. Cf. l. 425 above. Perhaps Milton had in mind *Revelation*, xii, 1, "A woman clothed with the sun."

784. "There is much in the Lady which resembles the youthful Milton himself." (Dowden.)

785. **Notion**; i.e., idea. **Mystery**. Not so much a secret, as something

beyond the comprehension. Frequently so used by St. Paul. Cf. *1 Corinthians*, ii, 7, also iii, 2.

788. **Art worthy.** Used in a bad sense; i.e., deserve.

791. **Dazzling fence.** A peculiarly apt figure taken from the art of fencing. Some editors take *fence* as an abbreviation of *defence*, but this would destroy the picturesqueness of the verse.

793. **Uncontrolled worth;** i.e., not controlled by "gay rhetoric."

797. **Brute earth.** The dull earth. This phrase is identical with the "bruta tellus" of Horace (*Od.* 1, xxxiv, 9). Tennyson in his *In Memoriam* has:—

"The brute earth lightens to the sky."

800-806. Spoken by Comus aside.

800. **She fables not.** Cf. 1 *King Henry VI*, IV, 2, 42:—

"He fables not: I hear the enemy."

803-806. Refers to the war of Zeus against the Titans.

804. **Erebus.** The infernal regions. The Titans were imprisoned under Tartarus.

808. **The canon laws of our foundation;** i.e., the laws of our institution. Canon law is really a church law. Milton by a bold figure applies the expression to Comus and his crew.

809. **Yet 'tis but the lees,** etc. Todd quotes from Nash's *Terrors of the Night*: "The grossest part of our blood is the melancholy humour: . . . It sinketh down to the bottom like the lees of the wine, corrupteth all the blood, and is the cause of lunacy."

814-815. The escape of Comus with his magic wand, contrary to the direction given in line 653, is a dramatic stroke on the part of Milton, otherwise he could not have introduced the beautiful Sabrina legend.

816. **Without his rod revers'd.** In magic lore the effects of magic spells could be undone by reversing these spells; i.e., by reciting the charms backwards. Thus, according to Ovid, Circe restored the companions of Ulysses to human shape. Cf. *Faerie Queene*, III, xii, 30-42.

822. **Mellboeus.** A name for shepherds, common to pastoral poetry. The reference here may be to Spenser, who tells the story of Sabrina in the *Faerie Queene*, II, x. 19, or to Geoffrey of Monmouth, a chronicler of the twelfth century, who was the first to give the legend.

823. **Soothest.** Truest. Cf. in sooth, forsooth.

824. There is a special fitness in introducing the Severn legend here to please the Welsh-English audience, who took a patriotic pride in the river.

827. **Whilome;** i.e., at one time. An obsolete word of Anglo-Saxon origin. **Locrine. Brute. Guendolen.** According to British tradition, Brutus, of Trojan origin, came to Britain, and ruled the land. At his death the territory was divided among his three sons, one of whom, Locrine, finally became king of the whole country. Locrine had married Guendolen, but had a daughter by a former love, Estrildis, named Sabra or Sabrina. Finally Locrine divorced Guendolen for Estrildis,

and acknowledged Sabrina as his daughter. Guendolen gathered her followers, made war upon Loctrine, and slew him. She then commanded Estrildis and Sabrina to be thrown into the river, and to perpetuate her revenge, ordered the river to be called Sabrina or the Severn. It will be noticed that Milton varies the latter part of the legend to suit his purpose.

832. **Cross-flowing.** Flowing across; *i.e.*, her flight.

834. **Pearled wrists.** The associating of pearls with the nymphs was conventional among the poets. Doubtless when Sabrina appeared, the audience could appreciate the picturesque expression.

835. Note the blending of classic mythology with British legend. **Nereus.** An aged Greek sea-god, father of the Nereids or sea nymphs. He dwelt in the deep sea.

836. **Lank;** *i.e.*, drooping, suggestive of the appearance of a drowned person.

837. **In nectar'd lavers;** *i.e.*, in baths of nectar. **Asphodel.** A lily-like plant which grew in the Elysian Fields. Our word "daffodil" is a corruption of it.

839. This line is evidently inspired by *Hamlet*, I, v, 63-64:—

"And in the porches of mine ears did pour  
The leperous distilment."

845. **Urchin blasts;** *i.e.*, injuries done by urchins or mischievous elves. The **urchin** is the hedgehog, which from the ugliness of its appearance was considered an animal of ill-omen. From this idea the evil spirits often assumed the form of hedgehogs. **Blasts**, see line 640.

850. A recognized method in pastoral verse of showing gratitude.

852. **The old swain;** *i.e.*, Melibœus (line 822 above).

863. **Amber-dropping hair;** *i.e.*, trickling with drops of amber-colored water. **Amber**, symbolizing the color of the river waves

866. Milton intended the song to end with this line, and inserted after it the stage direction — *to be said*; *i.e.*, by Lawes; but it was left to Lawes to decide.

868-889. The mythological characters in these lines may all be found in the *Classical Dictionary*. The epithets applied to them are taken from classic writers.

868. **Oceanus** was the most ancient sea-god in mythology. Neptune belongs to a later period.

872. **Carpathian wizard's hook.** The *Carpathian wizard* was Proteus (see *Class. Dict.*). He was the shepherd of Neptune's herds, and therefore carried a shepherd's hook. Cf. Wordsworth's lines:—

"Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,  
And hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

873. **Scaly Triton.** The lower part of Triton's body was that of a fish. He had a trumpet made of a shell.

874. **Glaucus.** He was noted for his prophetic powers, which were much valued by sailors and fishermen.

**875. Leucothea.** The white goddess. The name was given to Ino, who, to escape the rage of her husband, threw herself with her son Melicertes into the sea, and became the sea-goddess Leucothea. Lovely hands seems to be merely a perfunctory expression.

**876. Her son.** Melicertes, after deification, became the god of harbors.

**877. Tinsel-slipper'd.** A Miltonic epithet. Homer has "silver-footed" Thetis. Perhaps Milton wanted to avoid that expression, as it had become somewhat hackneyed.

**879. Parthenope and Ligaea** were two of the Sirens. The reference to Ligaea's *golden comb* and the two following lines seem to suggest that Milton had in mind the northern mermaid.

**885. Heave thy rosy head.** Cf. *L'All.*, 145.

**890.** The appearance of Sabrina would give great scope for the skill of the stage architect, and might be made very picturesque. **Rushy-fringed.** What may be termed a literary compound, introduced frequently in Milton's poetry for the picturesque effect.

**892. Sliding.** See *Hymn on the Nat.*, 47.

**893. Azurn sheen;** i.e., azure brightness. For the form of *azurn* compare our adjectives silvern, leathern.

**894. Turkis blue;** i.e., the turquoise, or Turkish stone, so called because it was thought to come from Turkey. Tennyson has:—

"Turkis and agate and almondine."

**897. Printless feet.** Denoting the lightness of her tread. Cf. the *Tempest*, V, i, 34:—

"And ye that on the sands with printless feet."

**914. Thrice upon thy finger's tip,** etc. The efficacy of sprinkling is frequently alluded to in the poets. Three was the regulation number in magic lore. Cf. *Macbeth*, I, iii, 35, and IV, i, 1.

**921. Amphitrite's bower;** i.e., in the court of Amphitrite, the wife of Neptune and queen of the sea.

**923. Sprung of old Anchises' line.** According to tradition Brutus, father of Locrine, was grandson of Ascanius, who, in turn, was grandson of Anchises.

**924-937.** A common form of invocation in pastoral verse. The idea is, "May you never feel the effects of the summer drought or October floods, and may prosperity in all things be thine."

**927. The snowy hills;** i.e., the Welsh mountains.

**928. Singed air;** i.e., the hot air.

**934. May thy lofty head,** etc. This passage has puzzled commentators. Some regard "lofty head" as taken literally; i.e., the source of the river. Others take "head" figuratively, but according to this idea the figure would seem to be mixed. There is probably an ellipsis in line 936; "And may thy head be crowned here and there upon thy banks with groves of myrrh and cinnamon."

**958. The scene changes.** The country dancers are introduced to give

the Attendant Spirit and his companions time to traverse the distance to the castle. This is the second anti-masque (see l. 93).

959. **Till next sunshine holiday.** Compare the country merrymaking in *L'All.*, 92-98.

960. **Without duck or nod.** Alluding to the awkward movements of the rustics as contrasted with the *other trippings* of their superiors.

962. **Court guise;** i.e., court dance.

963. **Mercury.** The messenger of the gods. He was represented with winged ankles; hence his name is synonymous with lightness of foot or with agility.

964. **Mincing Dryades.** The Dryades were the wood-nymphs, here represented as *mincing*; i.e., tripping with short, light steps.

966. It was not unusual for an actor to step forward, and address some member of the audience.

972. **Assays.** Trials.

974. **To triumph,** etc. The whole theme of the poem is contained in these lines.

976. **To the ocean now I fly.** The plot being brought to an end, the Attendant Spirit steps forward and delivers the epilogue. Masson notes that the first four lines imitate in rhyme and rhythm Ariel's song, *Tempest*, V, i; "Where the bee sucks," etc.

982-983. See note on line 393 above. Hesperus was the father of the Hesperides, who were represented sometimes as three in number, sometimes as four or seven. Usually only the apples of the tree are golden. Ovid, however, makes the tree golden.

984. **Crисped;** i.e., rippled by the wind, more frequently applied to water. Cf. *Par. Lost*, IV, 237.

985. **Spruce** = well attired.

986. **Rosy-bosom'd Hours.** The Hours (*Horæ*) were the goddesses of seasons. Compare the epithet *rosy-bosom'd* with the *rosy-fingered* applied by Homer to the dawn.

989. **Musky;** i.e., fragrant.

990. **Cedarn** = of cedar. Cf. l. 893.

991. **Nard and cassia.** Two aromatic plants, frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. Cf. *Psalm* xiv, 8, *Mark*, xiv, 3.

993. **Blow;** i.e., bloom. Note the transitive use of the verb.

995. **Purfled scarf;** i.e., the rainbow. *Purfled*, a common old word meaning fringed or embroidered.

997. **If your ears be true.** If your minds be attuned to understand the meaning of the legends I am about to relate. The allusion is, no doubt, to lines 999-1011.

999. **Adonis.** See *Hymn on the Nat.*, 204. Adonis was beloved by Venus, and died of a wound from a wild boar. In Heaven exists that true love which Venus exhibited in grieving over her wounded Adonis.

1002. **Th' Assyrian queen;** i.e., Astarte, identical with Venus, whose worship came from the East.

1003. **Spangled sheen.** Glittering brightness. See *Hymn on the Nat.*, 145.

1004-1011. These lines are allegorical. Cupid is Love; Psyche, the human soul. The idea seems to be that celestial love is raised (*advanc'd*) far above that of Venus and Adonis, and the human soul (Psyche), after undergoing the trials and troubles of earthly misfortune, is purified, and finds eternal love and happiness in Heaven. For the legend of *Psyche* see *Class. Dict.*

1011. **Youth and Joy.** Everlasting youth and joy come to the human soul only after it has found true happiness in Heaven. In the *Apology for Smectymnuus*, Virtue and Knowledge are the twins of Psyche.

1015. **Bow'd welkin.** The sloping sky.

1017. **To the corners of the moon;** i.e., to the horns of the moon.

1021. **Sphery chime;** i.e., the chimes of the spheres.

1022-1023. These two lines contain the moral of the poem, which Masson notes was a permanent maxim of Milton.

## LYCIDAS.

### LINES.

1. **Yet once more.** It would seem that Milton had determined to write no more poetry until he had completed the period of preparation which should ripen his powers and enable him to enter upon that great poetic work he had in mind. He had not written any verses for several years, but *sad occasion dear* compels him to forego his resolution, and to invoke the Muse once more. **Laurels.** The laurel, myrtle, and ivy are all associated with poets. By plucking them Milton symbolizes his return to verse writing. Some editors have thought that Milton gathers the laurel, etc., as funereal emblems to lay on the tomb of Lycidas; but as funereal emblems they are only figurative. The idea seems to be, "Once more I must wear the poet's garland."

3. **Harsh and crude.** Alluding to Milton's own view of the deficiency of his poetic powers. It is interesting to note, however, that the ivy, in England, flowers from Sept. 12 to Nov. 1, and its berries ripen from March 1 to May 20. As Milton wrote Lycidas in November, line 3 is particularly appropriate.

4. **And with forc'd fingers rude;** i.e., forced by the necessities of the occasion.

5. **The mellowing year.** Warton has pointed out that the mellowing year could not affect the leaves of the laurel, myrtle, and ivy, but Milton probably was thinking more of what these leaves and berries symbolize,—i.e., poetical fruit,—than of the leaves and berries themselves.

6. **Bitter constraint.** Perhaps Milton had in mind Spenser, who was moved by "hard constraint" to compose his *Pastoral Eclogue* on Sir Philip Sidney. **Sad occasion dear,**—a favorite arrangement of adjectives with Milton. **Dear.** In the English of Milton's time, *dear* "is used of whatever touches us nearly, either in love or hate, joy or sorrow." Shakespeare often applies it to that which is strongly disagreeable; e.g., "all your dear offences."

7. **Compels.** The use of a singular verb with a plural subject is very common in Elizabethan English. It implies a close union of the subjects.

8. **Lycidas,** the name of a shepherd in Theocritus, *Idyl*, VII, and of one of the speakers in Vergil's *Ninth Eclogue*. **Ere his prime.** King was only twenty-five years old.

11. **He knew himself to sing,** etc. Perhaps an exaggeration in praise of his friend. Only a few poems in Latin verse can be traced to

King, but he may have written many things which did not appear in print. **Knew . . . to sing.** A Latinism. Cf. Latin *scio* with infinitive. **Build the lofty rhyme.** Metaphor frequently used by the Greek and Latin poets. Coleridge and Tennyson imitate Milton in the use of the same.

13. **Welter**; i.e., to be tossed about by the wind. Cf. *Hymn on the Nat.*, 124; *Par. Lost*, I, 78.

14. **Melodious tear.** Spenser calls the songs in which the Muses lament the condition of the times "the tears of the Muses."

15. **Begin then**, etc. The invocation is cast in the pastoral style, borrowed from the classical poets. Theocritus, *Idyl*, I, 64, has:—

"Begin, ye Musea dear, begin the pastoral song."

15. **Sisters of the sacred well.** The nine Muses. The "sacred well" is the fountain Aganippe on Mt. Helicon, a spot sacred to the Muses. Some editors consider that the Pierian spring at the foot of Mt. Olympus is meant; but Milton probably modelled these lines after Hesiod, who refers to Mt. Helicon.

16. **The seat of Jove.** Milton uses the expression to connect the Muses with their great father.

19. **So**; i.e., on condition that I mourn for Lycidas. **Muse.** Here used for the poet inspired by the Muse.

20. Milton wishes some poet to honor his memory, as he is honoring that of Lycidas, by an elegy.

23-36. Metaphors in pastoral imagery to express his companionship with King at Cambridge.

26. **Opening eyelids of the morn.** Explain the figure. Cf. *Job*, iii, 9. This phrase has been borrowed by many poets, Marlowe, Sylvester, Crashaw, Tennyson.

28. **Gray-fly.** The trumpet-fly, which hums sharply at the hottest part of the day; hence, "her sultry horn."

29. **Battening**; i.e., feeding, same root as *better*.

30. **Oft till the star**, etc. Probably means any star that rose. Possibly refers to the evening star, Hesperus.

31. **Westerling** = west going.

33. **Oaten flute**; i.e., the pastoral pipe. In English poetry, tradition requires that the shepherd's pipe should be an "oat."

34. **Satyrs**—**Fauns.** See *Class. Dict.* The Satyrs belonged to Greek, the Fauni to Latin, mythology. Milton borrows this fancy from Vergil, *Eclogue*, VI, 27. There is probably no reference here, as some editors think, to Milton's fellow-students at Cambridge. It is simply a carrying out of pastoral imagery.

36. **Damætas.** A common name in pastoral poetry.

37-49. The most direct expression of personal grief which *Lycidas* contains.

37. Cf. Wordsworth's *Simon Lee*:—

"But, oh the heavy change! bereft  
Of health, strength, friends, and kindred."

**40. Gadding** = straggling. The poet Marvel speaks of "ye gadding vines."

**45. Canker** = the canker worm, that preys on leaves and blossoms. Often mentioned by Shakespeare, *Mid. N. Dr.*, II, ii, 3.

**46. Taint-worm.** A small red spider called the "taint." "By the country folk accounted a deadly poison to cows and horses." (Sir Thomas Browne in his *Vulgar Errors*.)

**48. The white thorn.** The hawthorn. **Blows** = blooms; *i.e.*, in the spring.

**50. Where were ye, Nymphs,** etc. This appeal to the nymphs is an imitation of Theocritus, *Idyl*, I, 66-69, and of Vergil, *Eclogue*, X, 9-12. Milton, like Theocritus, addresses the nymphs of those special localities which were near the scene of King's shipwreck.

**52. Steep.** Editors in general attempt to identify the particular mountain to which the poet refers. Some think it to be Penmaenmawr, others Denbighshire, which is mentioned as a burial-place of the Druids. Look up these places on a good map.

**53. Druids.** Who were the Druids? Were they bards, or is this Milton's fancy?

**54. Mona.** The isle of Anglesey, the island fastness of the Druids.

**55. Deva.** The river Dee, on which Chester is situated, whence King sailed. It forms the boundary between England and Wales. There are many legends connected with it, hence the expression "wizard stream."

**58. Muse herself.** Calliope. In the original MS. Milton wrote:—

"What could the golden-haired Calliope."

**59.** For the following story of Orpheus, see Ovid's *Met.*, XI, 1-55.

**61-63.** Orpheus was torn in pieces by the Thracian women, who were celebrating the orgies of Bacchus. His head, thrown into the Hebrus, was carried down to sea, and cast ashore on the Island of Lesbos. Vergil is Milton's authority for the "swift Hebrus."

**61. Rout** = band. This use of the word is common in Milton, Spenser, and Shakespeare.

**64-84.** This passage interrupts the narrative. It is one of the two long digressions in *Lycidas*. Milton takes the opportunity to give his views on the high office of the poet, the dignity of learning and study, and to bewail the condition into which poets and poetry had fallen.

**64. What boots it** = of what avail is it.

**65. I.e.,** to apply one's self to poetry. Notice the use of shepherd in a different metaphorical sense in lines 113-131.

**67-69.** A glance at the literature of the time. Would it not be better to lead, as other poets do, a life of ease and pleasure? Cf. Herrick and Suckling.

**68. Amaryllis and Neæra** are names taken from Greek pastorals.

**70. Clear** = noble. Spenser, in his *Tears of the Muses*, has:—

"Due praise, that is the spur of doing well."

72. An allusion to Milton's own life at this period. Not to wait for glory when one has done well; *that* is above all glory.

75. **The blind fury.** Atropos, one of the Fates, malignant as a Fury, who was fabled to cut the thread of life.

76. Fate may cut the thread of life, but not the praise that is a man's due.

77. **And touch'd my trembling ears.** Pope has:—

“Ere warning Phœbus touched his trembling ears.”

To touch a person's ear was a symbolical act to recall a matter to his memory, the ear being regarded as the seat of memory.

80. **Broad rumour** = wide notoriety.

82. **Jove**; i.e., God.

85. The poet resumes his pastoral style, apologizing to the rustic Muse for his digression. **Arethuse**, personification of a fountain near Syracuse, haunted by the pastoral Muse. **Mincius**, a tributary of the Po, “honored” as being near the birthplace of Vergil. Arethuse typifies Greek pastoral verse; Mincius, the Latin.

88. **But now my oat**, etc.; i.e., now I resume my theme.

89. **Herald of the sea.** Triton, son of Neptune, who came in behalf of Neptune to hold a judicial inquiry into the death of Lycidas.

90. **In Neptune's plea**; i.e., in Neptune's defence.

93-94. **Every** — **each**. Milton often uses both these words in the same sentence for variety. Cf. *Comus*, 19.

96. **Hippotades.** The son of Hippotes, Æolus, god of the winds.

97-102. This account is at variance with that of a poem in the Cambridge collection written by Edward King's brother, which has:—

“He, the fairest arm,  
Is torn away by an unluckie storm.”

99. **Panope** and her sister were the Nereids, daughters of Nereus, nymphs of the sea.

101. **Built in the eclipse**; i.e., built at an unlucky time. The eclipse was proverbially of evil omen. Cf. *Macbeth*, IV, i, 28, where among the ingredients of the witches, cauldron are:—

“Slips of yew  
Slivered in the moon's eclipse.”

103. **Camus.** The presiding deity of the Cam, representing the University. He was a frequent character in the verses of that period. **Went footing slow.** An allusion to the slow current of the Cam.

104-105. A fanciful costume. Masson describes the characteristic garb of Camus as follows: “The mantle is as if made of the plant ‘river sponge,’ which floats copiously in the Cam; the bonnet, of the ‘river sedge,’ distinguished by vague marks traced somehow over the middle of the leaves, and serrated at the edge of the leaves.”

106. **That sanguine flower** is the hyacinth. According to the legend, Hyacinthus was slain by Zephyrus, and from his blood sprang the flower named after him. See *Class. Dict.*

109. **The pilot of the Galilean lake**; i.e., St. Peter. See *Matthew*, iv, 19.

110. **Two massy keys**. See *Matthew*, xvi, 19. "Metals twain" is Milton's own idea.

111. **Golden**. See *Comus*, 13 and 14.

112. **Mitred locks**. St. Peter, as the first bishop of the church, is here introduced with the bishop's dress.

113-131. This is Milton's second digression from his theme, wherein he inveighs against the Established Church, as it was being administered by Archbishop Laud. This is Milton's first expression of sympathy with the Puritan party, with which he was afterwards so closely identified.

114. **Anow** = *enow*; i.e., enough.

115. A censure of those who take orders in the church for worldly gain. It comes with special significance from the lips of St. Peter.

119. **Blind mouths**. A mixture of metaphor. Masson says, "A singularly violent figure, as if the men were mouths and nothing else."

119-121. An allusion to the ignorance of the clergy.

122. **Sped**. Provided for.

124. **Scrannel** = screeching; some editors, however, take it to mean *thin*. This word seems to be of Milton's own coining.

126. *I.e.*, filled with empty and false doctrines.

127. **Rot inwardly**; i.e., their souls decay.

128. **The grim wolf** = The Church of Rome, which was making many converts at that time. **With privy paw**; i.e., secret paw.

130-131. It is not clear what Milton means by the *two-handed engine*. Perhaps he means the sword of Justice, or the "*two-edged sword*" of *Revelation*, i, 16. The idea evidently is that the time of retribution is at hand.

132. **Return, Alpheus**. The poet again resumes the pastoral strain. Alpheus was the lover of Arethusa, changed to a river. Alpheus symbolizes pastoral verse. See *Arcades*, 30.

135-151. One of the finest passages in Milton's poetry.

136. **Use** = haunt. Cf. Spenser's *F. Q.*, VI, Introd, 2:—

"In those strange waies where never foot did use."

138. **Swart star**. The star that turned the vegetation brown; i.e., Sirius, the dog-star.

139. **Enamelled**; i.e., as glossy as enamel, a favorite epithet of Milton. Cf. *Par. Lost*, IV, 149, IX, 525.

142-150. The idea of enumerating a number of flowers belongs to the pastoral style. Spenser and Ben Jonson do the same.

142. **Rathe.** See *Dict.*

146. **Well-attir'd;** i.e., well-clothed in leaves.

151. **Laureate hearse;** i.e., the hearse covered with laurels. It is not clear what *hearse* means here. Some commentators think it may be the bier on which the coffin rested, others think it refers to the tomb.

152-164. The construction of this passage is not very regular. The idea seems to be; "Let us, to ease our grief, play with the false notion that the body of Lycidas is lying before us; although in reality, alas! it is being borne away," etc.

154. **Shores.** Evidently means the waters near the shores. The use of the word has caused some comment. The original MS. has *floods* for *shores*. Jerrams suggests that Milton wished to bring out vividly the idea that the body is washed to different parts of the coast.

156. **Hebrides.** Look up on the map.

158. **Monstrous world;** i.e., the world of monsters.

160. **The fable of Bellerus;** i.e., the fabled abode of Bellerus. The name Bellerus was coined by Milton from Bellerium, the old name for Land's End, and means a Cornish giant fabled to have inhabited this region.

161. The vision here is that of the archangel Michael, who is said to have appeared to some hermits on the mount afterwards named for him. St. Michael's Mount is off Penzance.

162. **Namancos—Bayona.** Namancos is put down on Mercator's Atlas of 1636 near Cape Finisterre, with the Castle of Bayona on the south.

163. **Look homeward, angel.** Michael is here addressed, not Lycidas.

164. **Ye dolphins.** Alluding to the story of Arion, a Greek musician, who was thrown into the sea by some sailors, and borne safely ashore by the dolphins; so may they save Lycidas.

168. **The day-star;** i.e., the sun. The same simile occurs in another poem of the King collection.

170. **Tricks.** Cf. *Il P.*, 123. **With new-spangled ore;** i.e., with renewed golden splendor.

173. **Matthew,** xiv, 24-31. This allusion seems appropriate, seeing that Lycidas had perished at sea.

176. **Unexpressive**=inexpressible. See *Hymn on the Nat.*, 116. **Nuptial** refers to the marriage of the Lamb. *Revelation*, xix, 6-9.

177. This line was omitted in the edition of 1638, but is inserted in Milton's own handwriting in his own copy of that edition preserved at Cambridge.

181. See *Isaiah*, xxv, 8, and *Revelation*, vii, 17.

183. **The Genius of the shore;** i.e., the presiding deity of the shore, a frequent fancy of the Greek and Latin poets, borrowed by Milton.

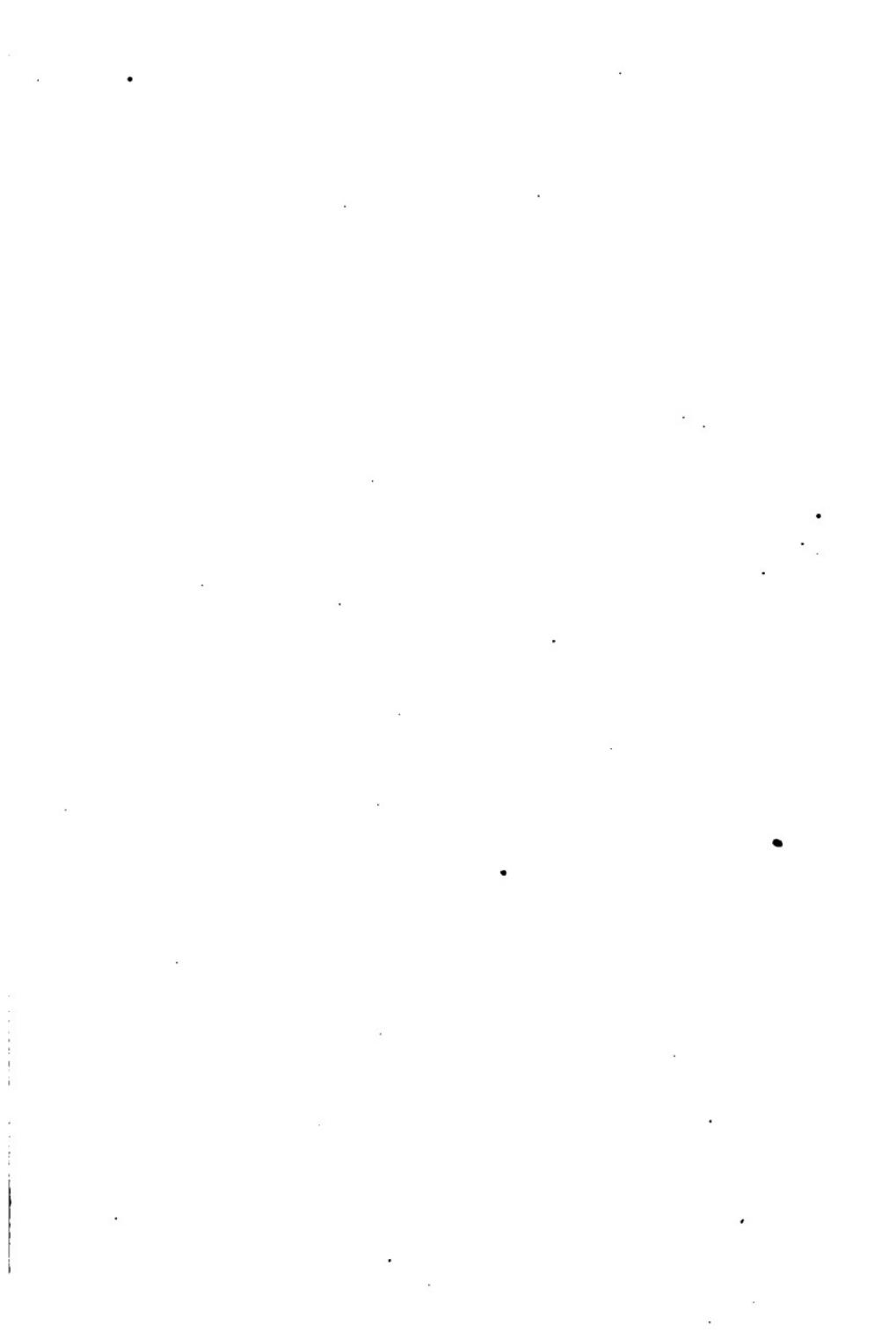
185. The pastoral ends with this line. The last eight lines are an Epilogue.

186. **Uuecouth.** Cf. *L'All.*, 5. Browne and Masson think the word means *unknown*. Keightley takes it in the sense of *rude*.

189. **Doric lay;** *i.e.*, pastoral verse. Theocritus and other pastoral poets of Greece wrote in the Doric dialect.

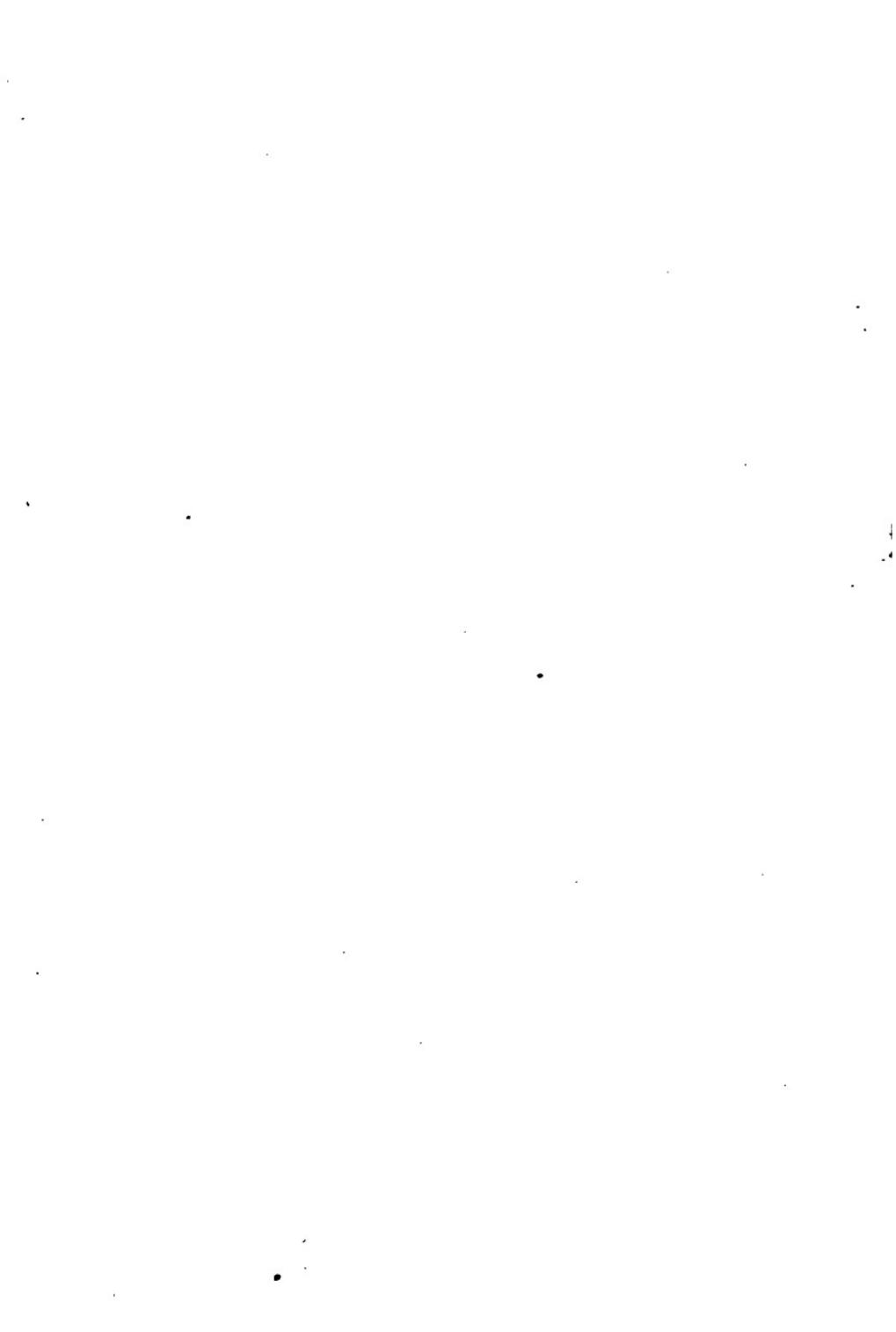
190. **Stretch'd out all the hills;** *i.e.*, the sun had lengthened out their shadows.

192. **Twitch'd = drew about him.** **Mantle blue,** "Blue was the color of the shepherd's dress." (Hales.) Note the beauty of the Epilogue.

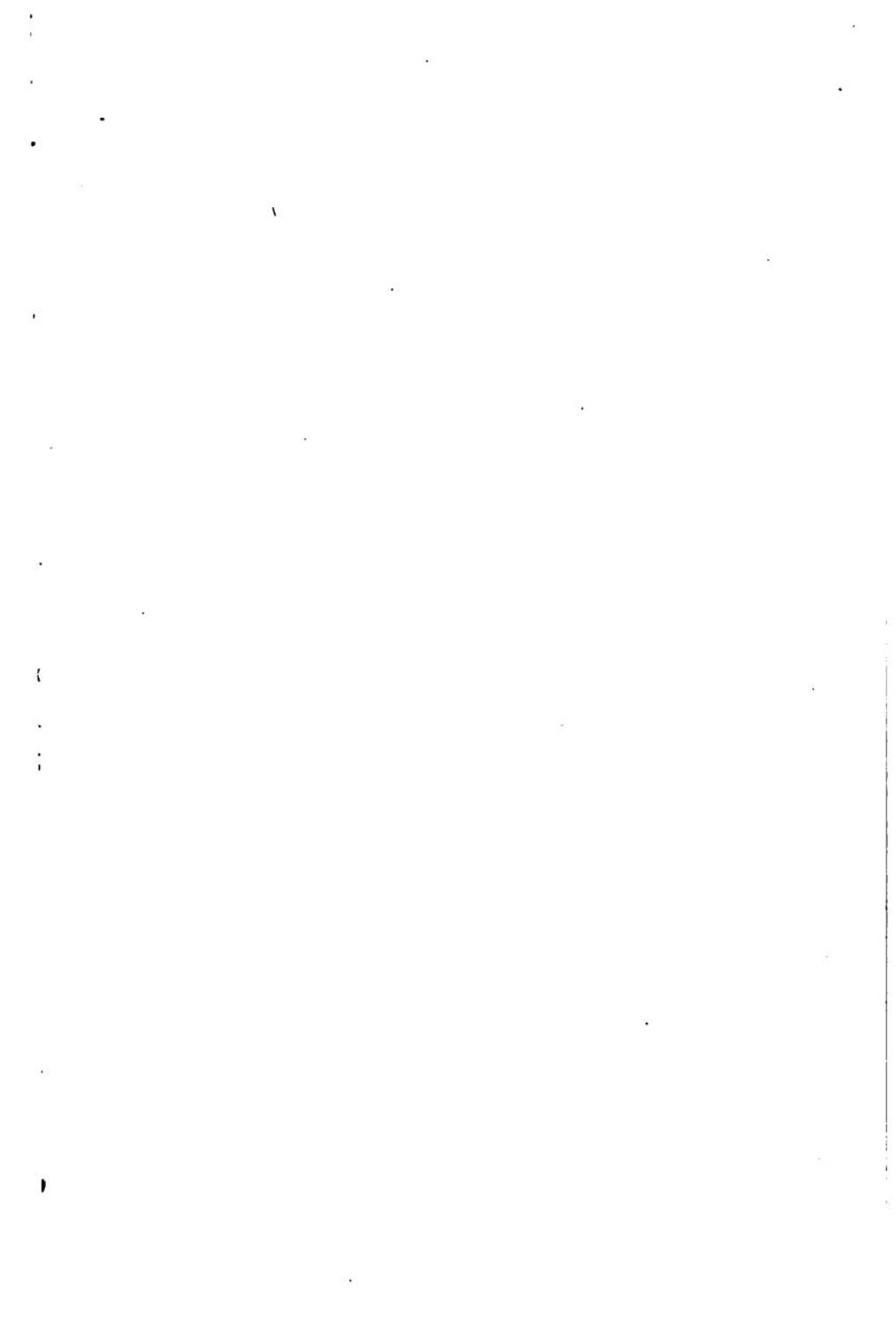












by cache - part or whole, or  
the reverse.

synonym: to be ignorant of denotes a  
deficient mind.

informed  
information  
knowledge

or  
also  
also

or not

conscious

intelligence

- Epitaphs in Conn.
- Line 32 - "tempered wif".  
Line 65 - "orient bairn"  
Line 115 - "lively drove"  
Line 139 - "Indian step".  
Line 163 - "easy-hearted man".  
Line 219 - "quivering garand".  
Line 340 - "long livell'd man".  
Line 442 - "cluster-shaffted spear".

271	-	2	7	2	.
362	-	3	6	5	.
589	-	5	9	0	.
393	-	3	2	6	.
373	-	3	7	5	.
703	-	7	0	3	.
103	-	1	0	3	.
113	-	1	1	3	.

